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FROM THE FUND GIVEN
IN MEMORY OF
GEORGE SILSBEE HALE
AND
ELLEN SEVER HALE

THE MASTERPIECES OF MODERN DRAMA

JOHN DREW AS PROSPER COURAMONT AND ETHEL BARRYMORE AS SUZANNE DE RUSEVILLE

Suz. Give me the scrap of paper that you had just now.
Pros. The scrap of paper! I don't understand.

THE MASTERPIECES OF MODERN DRAMA

FOREIGN

Narrated in Narrative, with Dialogue of the Great Scenes

BY
JOHN ALEXANDER PIERCE
FORMERLY WITH THE NEW YORK "SUN"

PREFACED WITH A CRITICAL ESSAY
BY
BRANDER MATTHEWS
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

NEW YORK
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1915

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INTRODUCTION

I

Now that the nineteenth century has so far receded from us that we can begin to survey it in a perspective not distorted by the prejudices which always mar our vision of the immediate present, we are at last able to sum up its efforts and its achievements in the several arts. When we consider the literature of the past hundred years we cannot fail to remark upon the extraordinary and unprecedented vogue of prose-fiction, beginning with the startling success of the Waverly novels of Scott in England in the first quarter of the century; stimulated by the indefatigable curiosity which sustains the Human Comedy of Balzac in France in the mid-years; and ennobled by the lofty veracity of Tolstoy's later studies of human struggles in Russia in the final decades. Poets there were in all the modern literatures, poets of high ambition and of genuine inspiration as well as sincere aspiration; historians and biographers, critics and essayists, there were in abundance; and yet the novelists outnumbered the others and seemed at times almost to outshine them. Indeed, the attraction of fiction was so potent that poets laid aside their singing robes to tell tales in humble prose; and historians, critics, and essayists now and again deserted their own fields to adventure themselves as novelists.

It is perhaps more or less in consequence of this inrushing of writers who were not primarily storytellers that the modern novel is so many sided and so uncertain of its own ultimate goal. The novelist to-day feels at liberty to compete with the historian in dealing with the manners and customs of the past; he holds himself at liberty to digress from his theme and to become discursive quite in the manner of the essayist; he does not hesitate to put into his pages the lyric cry, which has been the special privilege of

the poet; and he has despoiled the drama of its monopoly of dealing with the vital struggles of a soul at war with the words of fate. In other words, the modern novel is a chameleon, changing color as you gaze on it and taking on at will the semblance of history or poetry or drama. It is from the play that the story has made its most frequent and the most abundant borrowings; and it was from among the potential playwrights that novelists were most obviously recruited in mid-years of the nineteenth century.

The necessary result of this was that as prose-fiction flourished the drama dwindled. As the novel became more and more popular and more and more profitable, many of the writers intended by nature to be playwrights were tempted away to swell the ranks of the novelists. It is not too much to say that in the middle of the nineteenth century French was the only one of the leading literatures in which prose-fiction had not ousted the drama from its former position of proud preëminence; and even in France there was no dramatist of the force and the fecundity of Balzac. Even in France while Augier and the younger Dumas, Meilhac and Halévy, Becque and Labiche were still writing for the stage, Flaubert and the Goncourts and Daudet were emboldened to believe that the drama was an outworn form, incapable of carrying the message of a more cultivated and a more complicated civilization. And outside of France, in German literature and Italian, in English literature in both of its branches, British and American, the drama had almost ceased to be a competitor of prose-fiction. In these literatures it seemed as though a divorce had been proclaimed between literature and the drama; and in English as in German and in Italian most of the plays which were actable were unreadable and most of the plays which were readable were unactable.

Only in France was the art of the playwright held in honor; and only in France was there a constant production of plays that were both actable and readable. As it happened, this richness of French literature tended to increase the poverty of the drama in other languages because the absence of international stageright permitted the Italian and the German managers, the British and the American, to take French pieces without payment, so that their theatres were filled with mangled and misleading adapta-

tions of the works of the leading French playwrights. Thus the native dramatists of Germany and Italy, Great Britain and the United States were discouraged by being forced to vend their wares in competition with stolen goods. It is no wonder that many of them renounced the stage and turned to storytelling, which is always much easier and which for the moment was far more remunerative. Charles Reade, for one, used to maintain that he was a dramatist by native gift, compelled to practise as a novelist because of bad laws.

Yet in all these middle years of the nineteenth century while the drama was enfeebled, while there were scarcely any playwrights dealing simply and sincerely with the life of their own people in their own time and in their own country, the theatre itself was flourishing and there were actors of rich endowment and of high accomplishment. But these prominent performers were rarely eager for new plays; in fact, most of them preferred the old established favorites in which they could compete with the reputation of their predecessors. Of John Philip Kemble it was said that he believed that all the good plays had been written. Macready did bring out pieces written for him by Knowles and by Bulwer-Lytton; and he was amply rewarded for his courage; and Edwin Forrest sought to perform a like service for the drama on this side of the Atlantic. But Edmund Kean and Charles Kean, Junius Brutus Booth and Edwin Booth, Henry Irving and Joseph Jefferson, were content, for the most part, with the plays which had pleased earlier generations of playgoers; and these shrank from the risk of failure in untried novelties.

Then toward the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century there began to be signs of a change. First of all, there was a slackening in the dramatic productivity of France, which supplied a lessening number of plays available for export. Second, there was a general recognition of the right of a dramatist to control his pieces, not only in his own country, but in all countries; and the granting of international stage-right instantly removed the premium of cheapness which had filled our theatres with transmogrified French pieces. Thirdly, the novel seemed for a while to have exerted its full strength and to be too weary for further advance. Fourthly and finally, came the

discovery of the value of Ibsen's social-dramas, a discovery which revealed that the drama was not an outworn form unfit to carry a message to our complicated civilization.

So it came about that in the final quarter of the nineteenth century the divorce between literature and the drama was annulled. In German and Italian and English an increasing proportion of plays which were actable disclosed themselves as also readable; and the theatres of these languages began to lend to and to borrow from one another. Sarah Bernhardt appeared in the German "Madga" and Duse in the British "Second Mrs. Tanqueray"; Mrs. Fiske appeared in the Norwegian "Hedda Gabler" and George Arliss in the Hungarian "Devil." Bronson Howard's "Saratoga" was acted in Berlin; Gillette's "Secret Service" was acted in Paris; and Clyde Fitch's "Truth" was acted in Rome. The play became as popular and as profitable as the novel; and so it was that instead of potential playwrights becoming novelists the novelists themselves were tempted to turn dramatists—Barrie and Shaw and Galsworthy in Great Britain, Howells and James in the United States, Hervieu in France, Sudermann in Germany, and d'Annunzio in Italy. At the end of the nineteenth century the revival of the drama was no longer a hope or a hypothesis; it was an irrefragible fact, as indisputable in Hungary as in Austria, in the United States as in Great Britain. The drama had no longer any need or any desire to apologize for itself. It challenged the supremacy of the novel; and as the more difficult art, it won from the ranks of the writers of prose-fiction not a few of those who were most keenly interested in art for its own sake.

II

This revival of the drama in all the leading modern literatures, evident enough in the final decades of the nineteenth century and becoming more and more indisputable in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, could not have come about at a more fortunate moment, because it was coincident with a remarkable modification in the actual theatre and in the circumstances of actual performance—a modification which has profoundly influenced the methods of the contemporary drama and of which the full

results have not yet been made manifest. The dramatist must conceive his dramas and shape them in accord with the conditions of the playhouse in which they are to be performed. As he has never written his plays for posterity but always for his contemporaries, so he has always adjusted these plays to the theatre of his own time and his own country. This is as true of Sophocles and Shakespeare and Molière, as it is of Beaumarchais and Sheridan, of Victor Hugo and Ibsen.

The dramatic poet plans his plays for performance, by actors, in a theatre and before an audience; and consciously or unconsciously he fits them to the capability of the actors of his own time and his own country, to the shape and size and conditions of the theatres of his own time and his own country, and to the opinions and the prejudices of the audiences of his own time and his own country. The influence of the audiences is exerted only upon the content of his plays, upon what he will put into them, upon the themes he will treat; and the influence of the theatre is exerted upon the form of his plays, upon his method of telling his story on the stage. Any important change in the conditions of the theatre will compel the playwright to modify his method, to adapt his processes to these new conditions, to adjust his technic to the circumstances of performance to which the playgoers of his own time and his own country are accustomed.

Now, while the drama was awakening itself from its lethargic sleep, the theatre was undergoing a transformation which may have seemed to careless observers slight and unimportant, but which has already had obvious and far-reaching effects. This transformation of the theatre and the resulting modification of the methods of the dramatist is due to the development of the picture-frame stage out of the apron stage, which had earlier been evolved from the platform stage. Shakespeare wrote his plays for a bare platform, which was devoid of scenery (although supplied with "properties" of all sorts) and which jutted out into the yard, wherein the spectators stood. Two centuries later Sheridan wrote his plays for a stage which curved forward boldly, in what was called the "apron," on which the actors advanced to perform all the more significant incidents, because it was only out on the apron that suffi-

cient illumination could be secured to enable the spectator to see their faces. There was scenery, far behind on the stage itself, but this served mainly as a background from which the performers could come forward on the projecting apron, far beyond the curtain. On the apron stage, as on the earlier platform stage, the actors were surrounded on three sides by the audience; and they were in such close proximity to the spectator that it was natural enough for them to make speeches directly to him and to indulge in confidential soliloquies.

With the invention of more satisfactory appliances for lighting—the calcium light and the electric light—it became possible to illuminate the whole stage; and the projecting apron ceased to be a necessity. So it was cut away and the footlights receded to the curtain, which now rises and falls in a picture frame. The actors are no longer surrounded on three sides by the audience; they are no longer in close proximity to the spectators; and the characters are no longer tempted to reveal their souls and to set forth their schemes in confidential soliloquies addressed directly to the playgoers massed all around them. To talk at the audience has been discovered to endanger the plausibility of the performance, because it forced the actor to step "out of the picture." And the picture disclosed within the picture frame is no longer the vague background acceptable enough on the apron stage; it has become a reproduction of the fit habitation of the character whose home it purported to represent. Here the drama has been influenced by prose-fiction; Scott first and then Balzac had taught us how a character could be revealed in a characteristic environment. It was from the novel that the realistic movement spread to the play; and it is only on the picture-frame stage that it is possible to present the persons of the drama in their appropriate surroundings.

Furthermore, as this characteristic environment is often indicated by a complex stage-setting, with realistic scenery, realistic furniture, and realistic properties, it takes more time for its proper preparation than was needed for the more primitive scenery which supplied a background satisfactory enough on the apron stage, the dramatist has discovered the advisability of not changing the scenery during an act, unless there was some unusual advantage to be

gained. Just as the adoption of the picture frame forced the abandonment of the soliloquy, so the adoption of the single set to the act compelled a closer compacting of the story and imposed on the playwright a severer economy of construction. In fact, the changes in the conditions of performance necessarily brought about various changes in the methods of the playwright and forced him to solve novel problems of technic.

The transformation of the apron stage of the end of the eighteenth century into the picture-frame stage of the beginning of the twentieth century, and the resulting modification of the methods of playmaking can now be observed in the theatres of all the leading cities of the world; a modern type of playhouse has been slowly evolved in consequence of international borrowings, every country availing itself speedily of the inventions and improvements of every other country. It is to this twentieth-century type of theatre that the twentieth-century playwright adjusts his play, no matter what his nationality. Plays are now immediately transportable from one language to another; and the dramatists of every modern language are composing their plays in accordance with the same set of principles. So far as its structure is concerned, there is no difference between a German play and a Hungarian, or between an American and an Italian. The craftsmanship may be more dexterous in the work of the French dramatists, but they are working in accord with a body of artistic doctrine accepted also by the dramatists of every other modern language.

But while the external form of the contemporary drama does not vary from tongue to tongue, the internal content retains the full flavor of its author's nationality. The skeleton of a comedy by Hervieu may resemble the skeleton of a comedy by Barrie, but the spirit of the former is as indisputably Gallic as the spirit of the latter is undeniably British. So far as their technic is concerned, the plays of Clyde Fitch and Herman Bahr, of Echegaray and d'Annunzio are more or less identical; but there the resemblance ceases and each of these authors reveals his racial point of view in his choice of theme, in his handling of situation, and in his treatment of character. The drama of the twentieth century is cosmopolitan in its acceptance of a unified

theory of the theatre; but it is intensely national and therefore immensely varied in its divergent outlook upon life. Here the art of the modern dramatist is seen to resemble the art of the modern writer of short stories. In form, in method, in technic, the short stories of Poe and Bret Harte and O. Henry, of Stevenson and Kipling, of Maupassant and Daudet, of Turgenef and Sacher-Masach, are surprisingly alike; while in content, in flavor, in aroma, every one of these writers discloses instantly that he is solidly rooted in the soil of his nativity.

III

It is partly because the technic of the short story is more difficult than that of the more loosely knit novel that so many of our later writers of fiction have been tempted to wrestle with the exigencies of the briefer form; and it is partly because in like manner the technic of the drama demands a sterner effort that so many of our later novelists have sought to win success also on the stage. A true artist joys in overcoming obstacles and in turning stumbling-blocks into stepping-stones. This desire of the ardent artist to wrestle with technical problems is one reason why the sonnet with its rigid scheme of rimes has always been alluring to poets. This is one reason why we may expect the drama to attract to itself the more richly endowed storytellers and why we have a right to hope that the present rivalry between the drama and prose-fiction will become more acute.

(This much at least is certain now, that in all the more important modern literatures the drama has been reborn. No one who is interested in understanding his fellowman in his own country and in other countries can afford to neglect the plays of our time. It is a chief function of literature to enable us to see ourselves first of all—and this we can do best in the novels and the plays of our fellow-countrymen. Almost equally important are the novels and plays written in foreign tongues which enable us to see foreigners as they see themselves and which help us therefore to that more intimate understanding of alien peoples that makes for international comity.)

As plays, whether native or foreign, are composed spe-

cifically for performance on the stage, and as they therefore display their full power and render up their full meaning only when they are acted, it is best always to see them in the theatre whenever this is possible. But unfortunately it is not always possible. Even in the largest cities many of the most interesting plays are visible in the playhouse only infrequently; and in the smaller towns and in the remoter rural districts the opportunities of seeing them are even more limited. In default of the possibility of beholding them in the theatre we shall have, perforce, to content ourselves with the less satisfactory perusal in the library. We shall have to recover the lost art of reading plays as easily and as effectively as we read novels. We shall have to train ourselves to interpret the stage directions of the dramatist and to learn as best we can to visualize the actual performance we are deprived of.

In the eighteenth century and even in the earlier years of the nineteenth century, before the overwhelming popularity of the Waverly novels led to the enormous expansion of prose-fiction and to the consequent decline of the English drama, plays were as freely read as novels. A successful comedy or tragedy went through edition after edition. Hazlitt dwelt on the delight of reading a comedy in which the cleverest things are said and the most amusing happen. But as the novel slowly but surely crowded out the play, the mass of readers became accustomed to the amplitude of description and to the superfluities of analysis in which the novelist was wont to indulge; and they came in time to find the bare dialogue of a play, supported only by sparse stage directions, a little too bare for comfortable perusal. They became too lazy to make the effort needed to picture the action for themselves. In other words, the art of reading a play was lost by the immense majority of those whose faculties were weakened by the often excessive amount of detail provided in the more leisurely and less-condensed narratives of the novelist.

To-day there is evidence that this lost art is being recovered, both in Great Britain and in the United States. There has been a constant succession of translations of the social dramas of Ibsen; and abundant English renderings of the more important pieces of other European dramatists have been published in the past score of years. The

American or British reader who has only his own native language has been enabled to form his own opinion of the most significant plays of Rostand, d'Annunzio, Strindberg, Tchekof, and Hauptmann. The more ambitious of the playwrights of our own language have been encouraged to prepare their pieces for publication; the plays of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Galsworthy have been carried to hundreds of readers who have never had an opportunity to see anything by either of these British writers represented in the theatre. The Drama League of America has encouraged its members to peruse plays, and to this end it has issued carefully prepared and annotated lists.

(It is one of the objects of the series of volumes to which this paper serves as an introduction to aid in the acquisition of the art of reading a play. Half a hundred of the most important and most interesting pieces of the last half century have been chosen; and the story of each has been retold in the form of succinct narrative which from time to time gives place to the actual dialogue of the play itself. Thus the possessor of these volumes will be introduced to many masterpieces of the modern drama by an ingenious and enticing compromise between the unadorned dialogue of the stage play and the unbroken narrative of prose-fiction.)

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

Columbia University
in the City of New York.

THE MASTERPIECES OF MODERN DRAMA

PART I

POIRIER'S SON-IN-LAW

BY ÉMILE AUGIER AND JULES SANDEAU

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Gymnase in 1854.

ARGUMENT: Poirier, a wealthy retired merchant who married his daughter to the Marquis de Presles to favor his dreams of social and political advancement, finding that she is not happy blames her husband's idleness and undertakes to make him seek an occupation. The Marquis is on the point of discovering that he is really in love with his wife when Poirier learns that his daughter has signed away her dowry to pay his debts, and takes revenge by imposing the strictest economies, thus driving the Marquis back to a fast life. Will the Marquis be reclaimed and make his wife happy?

Gaston, the Marquis de Presles, has not seen his old friend Hector, the Duke of Montmeyran, for some months, when Hector, who is in the army, comes back from Africa on furlough. Hector entered the service for the same reason that Gaston married the daughter of a wealthy bourgeois, as a means of livelihood.

Duke. Before I went away I placed the remnants of my fortune in the hands of a banker. It amounted to some hundred thousand francs, the revenue from which will give me thirty days of my old life each year. Naturally, I have chosen the carnival season for my prodigalities. It began yesterday. I arrive to-day, and my first visit is to you.

Gaston. Thanks! I will not hear of your staying elsewhere than at my house.

Duke. Oh, I don't want to inconvenience you.

Gast. You won't inconvenience me in the least.

Duke. Well, frankly, it's not you who I am afraid of incommoding, but myself. You understand . . . You live with your family . . . your wife and father-in-law . . .

Gast. Oh, yes. You imagine because I married the daughter of a cloth merchant that my house is the temple of ennui, that my wife keeps a horde of bourgeois virtues in her wardrobes, and that all there is to be done is to write on my door: Here lies Gaston, Marquis de Presles! Disillusion yourself. I live the life of a prince. I keep racing stables, gamble without limit, buy paintings, and have the best cook in Paris, a scamp who pretends to be descended from Vatel and who takes his art very seriously. I keep open house. Parenthetically, you shall dine to-morrow with all our old friends and shall see how I entertain. In short, marriage has suppressed none of my habits, none except the creditors.

Duke. Do your wife and father-in-law throw the bridle on your neck?

Gast. Exactly. My wife is a little school miss, pretty enough, rather awkward, rather timid, still wonderstruck by her metamorphosis, and I'd swear that she spends her time looking at the Marchioness de Presles in the mirror. As for Monsieur Poirier, my father-in-law, he is worthy of his name.* Modest and nourishing like all fruit trees, he was born to live on a trellis. His entire ambition was to supply the deserts of some gentleman. His prayers were heard by heaven.

At the age of fifteen Gaston was left an orphan. Five years later he came into his fortune and lost no time in making ducks and drakes of it, entertaining great expectations on account of the wealth of an old bachelor uncle, who had the bad taste, however, to marry and have children. Thus Gaston had nothing but his debts in the amount of 500,000 francs. His only recourse was to join the corps of sons-in-law, and then Poirier came his way. He assures Gaston that he has arrived at a very opportune moment as he needs a second in a duel that he is going to fight on account of Madame de Montjay.

**Poirier* means pear tree.

Presently Poirier enters with his friend, Verdelet, and Gaston takes occasion to treat him with an air of grand patronage before taking Hector out to show him "his stables." Verdelet disapproves very strongly of Poirier's servility, and predicts that the Marquis will ruin him in ten years. Poirier says he would rather be loved than feared, and that he wishes to make Gaston feel his indebtedness, but is evidently nettled. Verdelet remarks that this extreme delicacy comes to him rather late in life. Having had enough of the topic, Poirier picks up a newspaper. His eye falls on an announcement of a manufacturer having been made a peer. The item fans his own ambition, which is another butt of Verdelet's ridicule.

Poirier is rather jealous of his daughter's fondness for Verdelet, who is her godfather, and who always takes her side against him. Antoinette comes into the room while they are still discussing the son-in-law, and Poirier remarks that he could wish that Gaston had some other occupation than spending money.

Poirier [*to* ANTOINETTE]. One is very weak toward his wife during the honeymoon. If you should ask him this prettily . . . in the evening . . . while taking your hair down . . . ?

Antoinette. Oh, father!

Poir. What! That's how Madame Poirier asked me to take her to the opera, and I took her there the very next night. . . . You see!

Ant. I should never dare speak to my husband of such a serious thing.

Poir. But your dowry certainly gives you some say in the matter.

Ant. He would shrug his shoulders and not answer me.

Verdelet. He shrugs his shoulders when you speak to him?

Ant. No, but . . .

Verd. Oh, oh! You lower your eyes. It seems that your husband treats you somewhat slightingly. It's what I've always feared.

Poir. Have you reason to complain of him?

Ant. No, father.

Poir. Doesn't he love you?

Ant. I don't say that.

Poir. What is it you do say, then?

Ant. Nothing.

Verd. Come, my girl, explain yourself frankly to your old friends. We were only created and put in the world to watch over your happiness. In whom would you confide if not in your father and godfather? Something puts you out?

Ant. I have no reason to be put out. My husband is very kind and very good.

Poir. Well, then?

Verd. Does that suffice? He's kind and good, but he pays scarcely more attention to you than he would to a pretty doll? Isn't that it?

Antoinette says it is her own fault. She is timid with Gaston. She dares show him neither her mind nor heart, fearing that he will regard her as a schoolgirl who wanted to be a marchioness. How can she tell him that it was not his title that pleased her, but the grace of his manners, his lively wit, chivalrous disposition, and his disdain for the paltry meannesses of life; how tell him that he is the man of her dreams, if he stops her with a pleasantry at the first word? She confesses to the fear that she bores Gaston.

Verd. A wife should be the preoccupation and not the occupation of her husband.

Poir. Why did I always adore your mother? Because I never had time to think of her.

Verd. Your husband has twenty-four hours a day in which to love you.

Poir. Too much by twelve.

Ant. You open my eyes.

Poir. Let him take some employment and things will go as they should.

Ant. What do you think, Tony?

Verd. It's possible. The difficulty is to make him consent.

Poir. I'll bell the cat. You two back me up.

Verd. Do you mean to bring up the question at once?

Poir. No, after dinner. I've noticed that Monsieur the Marquis has a gay digestion.

Hector finds Antoinette charming, but Gaston replies indifferently that she is well enough. A painting is brought in that Gaston ordered and he and Hector discuss it as connoisseurs.

Poir. It isn't interesting in the least, such a subject. It means nothing. I have an engraving in my room that represents a dog on the seashore barking at a sailor's cap. What do you think of that! That's comprehensible. It's ingenious, simple, and touching.

Gast. Well, Monsieur Poirier . . . since you like touching pictures I'll have one painted for you after a subject which I have taken from nature myself: on a table a little onion cut in quarters, a poor little white onion! The knife was lying beside it. . . . It wasn't much, but it brought tears to the eyes.

It is rather a shock to Poirier to learn that Gaston gave fifty louis for the picture. If the artist was really hard up, he thinks Gaston could have bought it for twenty-five at the dinner hour. It is not that he is unwilling to protect the arts but the artists, who are lazy, good-for-nothing fellows. Dinner is announced, and Poirier says they are to have some wine of a rare old vintage that is worth fifteen francs a bottle. He tells Verdelet privately that they two will not partake of it.

After dinner Gaston is in such good humor that he calls Poirier an excellent man, and says he only wishes there were some way in which he could acquit himself.

Poir. You are happy, my dear Gaston. That you should say so is my best recompense.

Gast. I ask only to double your gratification.

Poir. But here after three months given over to the sweetness of the honeymoon. That seems to me enough for romance, and I think the time come to think of history.

Gast. Zounds! You talk like a book. Think of history, I'm quite willing.

Poir. What do you think of doing?

Gast. To-day?

Poir. And to-morrow, and in the future. . . . You ought to have some idea.

Gast. Of course, my plans are made. I mean to do to-day what I did yesterday, and to-morrow what I shall do to-day. I am not a versatile soul in spite of my frivolous air, and so long as the future may resemble the present I am satisfied.

Poir. But you are too sensible to believe in the eternity of a honeymoon.

Gast. Too sensible, you have said it, and too well posted on astronomy. . . . But you must have read Henry Heine.

Poir. You have, haven't you, Verdelet?

Verd. I've read him, I admit.

Poir. He was a fellow who spent his life playing truant.

Gast. Well, Henry Heine interrogated as to the fate of old full moons replied that they were broken up to make stars.

Poir. I don't see the . . .

Gast. When our honeymoon grows old we'll break it up, and there'll be material enough to make a milky way.

Poir. The idea is doubtless very gracious.

Gast. Its chief merit is its extreme simplicity.

Poir. But seriously, doesn't the somewhat idle life you lead seem disastrous to the happiness of matrimony?

Gast. Not in the least.

Verd. A man of your talents ought not to condemn himself to perpetual unemployment.

Gast. With resignation. . . .

Ant. Aren't you afraid, dear, that ennui will get the better of you?

Gast. You calumniate yourself, my dear.

Ant. I'm not so vain as to think that I can fill your entire existence, and I own that I should be very glad to see you follow the example of Monsieur de Montmeyran.

Gast. Do you advise me to enlist?

Poirier advances the idea that the nobility cannot continue forever to abstain from taking any part in affairs, and points out that a number of the nobles have engaged in commerce. Gaston stops him. It is not a question of politics, he says, politics may be discussed but not sentiments. He is bound to the old order. He will not have another word on the subject, and begs Hector's pardon that the subject should have come up. A servant enters and speaks to Poirier.

Poir. Your creditors are here.

Gast. Yours, my dear sir. I have given them to you.

Antoinette and Verdelet go out. Poirier says he will see the creditors, and Gaston tells him not to be too polite to

the scoundrels. Hector knows them and lets drop the fact that he borrowed money of them at fifty per cent. Poirer exclaims that there are laws against usury. Hector explains that the transaction is made in a legal way. One gives his note and receives only half its face value in cash. Poirier turns to Gaston.

Poir. I like to think that you haven't borrowed at such a rate.

Gast. I should like to think so, too.

Poir. Fifty per cent!

Gast. Neither more nor less.

Poir. Why didn't you tell me so before? Before your marriage I might have made a bargain.

Gast. That's just what I didn't want. It would be a fine thing to see the Marquis de Presles redeeming his word at a discount. It would be insulting his own name.

Poir. Nevertheless, if you owe only half . . .

Gast. I received only half, but I owe the whole. It's not to those robbers, but to my signature.

Poir. It seems to me that in reimbursing these scamps for what they paid out, and in adding interest compounded at six per cent., you would have satisfied the most scrupulous probity.

Gast. This is not a question of probity, but of honor.

Poir. What difference do you make between the two?

Gast. Honor is the probity of a gentleman.

Poir. So our virtues change their names when you are good enough to practise them? You rub the dirt off before you use them? I'm surprised at one thing, and that is that a noble's nose deigns to have the same name as a bourgeois'.

He warns Gaston that he is going to try to get out of the situation at the best bargain he can, and goes out. Hector goes to make arrangements for the duel over Madame de Montjay, and Antoinette comes back. She observes that the other evening at the opera Gaston spent a long time in Madame de Montjay's box. She asks if the lady is clever. Gaston replies that she is, and there is a silence.

Ant. Why haven't you let me know when I have done something that displeases you?

Gast. I have never failed to.

Ant. Oh! You have never said a word of remonstrance.

Gast. Then that is because you have never done anything that displeased me.

Ant. Without going any further, in insisting just now that you should seek an employment I offended you.

Gast. I no longer think of it.

Ant. You may believe that if I had known what a worthy sentiment I was going counter to . . .

Gast. Really, my dear child, one would say that you were making excuses for me.

Ant. It is because I am afraid that you may attribute it to puerile vanity. . . .

Gast. And if you should have a little vanity, what a crime that would be!

Ant. I haven't any, I assure you.

Gast. [*getting up*]. Well, my dear, you are without faults; for I have seen no others in you. Do you know that you have made Montmeyran's conquest. That's a thing to be proud of. Hector is difficult.

Ant. Less so than you.

Gast. You think me difficult? You see you really are vain. I've caught you at it.

Ant. I have no illusions about myself. I know all that I lack to be worthy of you . . . but if you would like to take the trouble to guide me, to teach me the ideas of your set, I like you well enough to be metamorphosed.

Gast. [*kissing her hand*]. I should only lose by the metamorphosis. Besides, I should be a bad instructor. There is but one school in which to learn that which you believe you are ignorant of: that is the world. Study it.

Ant. Yes, I shall model myself on Madame de Montjay.

Gast. That name again! . . . Are you doing me the honor of being jealous? Take care, my dear, that feeling is very bad form. Know, since you permit me to be pedagogue, know that in our world marriage is not housekeeping; we share in common only the noble and elegant things of life. So when I am away from you, do not worry about what I am doing; say to yourself simply: he is tiring out his faults so that he may bring me an hour of approximate perfection.

Ant. I find that your greatest fault is your absence.

Gast. The madrigal is pretty, and I thank you for it. The creditors are unwilling to go without seeing the

Marquis. They complain that he has treated them as if they were bloodsuckers, whereas they are very honest fellows. Gaston asks if his notes have not been paid in full. They reply that a bagatelle is missing, or, in other words, two hundred and twenty-eight thousand francs. Rather than give up the full amount, they report, his father-in-law has declared that he would see him in the debtor's prison.

Gaston acknowledges his indebtedness for the balance and informs them that he now has considerable property. They know, however, that he cannot touch it without the consent of his wife. Antoinette immediately writes her note for the amount and gives it to the moneylenders, who bow themselves out with profuse thanks.

Gaston throws his arms around Antoinette and kisses her impulsively, exclaiming that he adores her. He addresses her as "Marchioness," and calls her attention to the fact. The clock striking three reminds him of an appointment with Madame de Montjay, but he asks Antoinette to go for a drive. Poirier comes in.

Gast. [*to* POIRIER]. Permit me to acknowledge your skilfulness. You tricked those rogues neatly. [*Low to* ANTOINETTE.] You see how agreeable I am?

Poir. You take the thing better than I had hoped. I was prepared for a haughty kick about your honor.

Gast. I'm reasonable, my dear sir. You acted according to your lights. I find it the less bad because it has not prevented us from acting according to our ideas.

Poir. What?

Gast. You paid these rascals only their actual credit. We have paid the rest.

Poir. [*to his daughter*]. What, you have signed? [ANTOINETTE *makes an affirmative sign.*] Oh, God in heaven! Why did you do that?

Ant. I beg your pardon, father. . . .

Poir. I rack my brains for a way to save a good round sum, and you throw it out of the window! Two hundred and twenty-eight thousand francs!

Gast. Don't cry, Monsieur Poirier, it is we who shall lose it and you who gain it.

A maid brings Antoinette's hat and she goes out with Gaston. Poirier determines to put an end to his son-in-law's domination before it costs him his eyes. He sends

for the doorkeeper and the cook. The former he directs to put up a sign offering the second floor of the house and the stables and coach houses for rent. Then he demolishes the cook's elaborate menu for the dinner to which Gaston has invited a number of friends and substitutes a few simple bourgeois dishes.

Gaston returns from the drive still more highly pleased with his wife, and assures her that she is the most charming woman whom he knows. Their drive was delightful, but the views of her mind were prettier. He had lived with her without knowing her, like a Parisian in Paris. He says he is like a countryman who has given shelter to a queen in disguise. Suddenly the queen puts on her crown, and the rustic is greatly confused at not having received her with more ceremony. He was only her husband. Now he wishes to be her lover.

Antoinette does not like the distinction. She has always regarded marriage as the closest and most tender of relations, and tells him that love for another man than her husband would seem to her a sentiment outside of nature. There is another side to this. As there is only one man in the world for her she demands all his affection. If she should find that he took it elsewhere she would make no complaint or reproach, but the tie would be broken; her husband would at once become a stranger to her; she would consider herself a widow.

When Gaston is alone with Poirier a little later he asks his father-in-law if he has made his decision.

Poir. No, but I have made a decision.

Gast. Violent?

Poir. Necessary!

Gast. Would it be indiscreet to ask what it is?

Poir. On the contrary, it is an explanation that I owe you. In giving you my daughter and a million I imagined that you would consent to take a position.

Gast. Do not let us go back to that, I beg you.

There are a few reforms, Poirier explains, that he has no doubt Gaston will approve of. The first is that he shall not serve as a butt for Gaston's ridicule, for although Gaston regards him as a very insignificant person there are more brains in his slipper than in Gaston's hat.

Gast. Fie! That's trivial. You speak like a common person.

Poir. I'm not a marquis, myself.

Gast. Don't say it so loud. One would end in believing it.

Poir. Let them believe it or not, it's the least of my troubles. I make no pretension to gentility, thank God! I don't take enough account of it for that. I laugh at the chances of birth. Nobility doesn't dazzle me.

Gaston is well aware, however, that Poirier had an ulterior motive in making him his son-in-law, and finally obliges him to admit that he hoped Gaston would go to court and thus promote his own ambitions. He suggests that Poirier should seek training in commerce in emulation of Richelieu, Colbert, and other great statesmen.

Poir. Oh, I don't pretend to such. . . .

Gast. But what would befit this good Monsieur Poirier? A prefecture? Fie upon it! State councillor, no! A diplomatic post? Ah, it happens that the embassy at Constantinople is vacant.

Poir. I have sedentary tastes. I do not understand the Turk.

Gast. Wait! [*Striking* POIRIER *on the shoulder.*] I believe the peerage would fit you like a glove.

Poir. Oh, you think so?

At last Poirier says he has three million francs which he can invest in landed property at a word from Gaston.

Gast. You shall be a count.

Poir. No, we must be reasonable. Baron is enough.

Gast. The Baron Poirier! It sounds well in the ear.

Poir. Yes, Baron Poirier!

Gast. [*looks at him and bursts out laughing*]. I beg your pardon, but really it's too drole! Baron! Monsieur Poirier! . . . Baron de Catillard!*

Poir. [*aside*]. He's making game of me!

HECTOR *comes in.*

Gast. Come here, Hector! Come! Do you know why John Gaston de Presles was the first in the assault at La Rochelle? Why Louis Gaston de Presles blew up his ship at La Hogue? Why Philip Gaston de Presles took two flags at Fontenoy? Why my grandfather died at Quiberon?

*Catillard is a pear used for cooking.

It was in order that Monsieur Poirier might one day be made a baron or peer of France.

Hector. What do you mean?

Gast. That was the secret of the little attack made on me this morning.

Poir. Do you know, my lord, why I worked fourteen hours a day for thirty years? Why I amassed four millions, sou by sou, while denying myself everything? It was so that Monsieur the Marquis Gaston de Presles, who did not die at Quiberon, nor at Fontenoy, nor at La Hogue, nor elsewhere, may die of old age on a feather bed, after having passed his life in doing nothing.

Duke. Well answered, sir!

Gast. That promises well for the tribune!

A servant informs Poirier that some one has come to see the apartments which are to let. It is a shock to Gaston to learn that his father-in-law means to let the second floor, and the stables and coach houses as well. Poirier says Gaston can live on the third floor.

Gast. And my horses? Will you lodge them on the third floor, too?

Poir. You shall sell them.

Gast. I go on foot?

Duke. It will be good for you. You don't walk enough.

Poir. Besides, I shall keep my little blue coupé. I will lend it to you.

The cook enters and formally tenders his resignation to Gaston, who accepts it upon learning that Poirier has changed the menu and has also invited some plebeian friends of his own to the dinner. Gaston says he is going to leave the house himself the next day, Poirier inquires what profession he will adopt, for he will need more income than nine thousand francs, since that is all that the remains of Antoinette's dowry will produce. It is not a revenue, he points out, on which Gaston will be likely to nourish his friends with carpes à la Lithuanienne and volailles à la concordat. He advises Gaston to remain where he is, and to consider his children, who will not be sorry to find in the pocket of the Marquis of Presles the fruits of Goodman Poirier's economies. He turns abruptly and goes out.

Gaston observes that Poirier has done him an unexpected service, and saved him from covering himself with ridicule

by falling in love with his wife. He could never kiss her again without thinking of that old crocodile. He is going to see Madame de Montjay, who has been expecting him for two hours. Hector tries in vain to stop him, and then reminds him that he is to fight the duel with Pontgrimaud at two o'clock the next day. Gaston says that judging by the humor he is in, Pontgrimaud is going to have a lively time of it.

Hector takes it upon himself to apprise Antoinette that her father, irritated by Gaston's refusal to further his ambitions, is avenging himself by annoyances for which he fears she will suffer. Verdelet assures her that if the house is made odious to Gaston he will seek distraction elsewhere. At this moment a servant comes in with a letter for Gaston which he says was left by Madame de Montjay's footman.

Antoinette knows that Gaston has been attentive to Madame de Montjay lately, but does not think he is her lover. He should have had to have begun his advances on the morrow of their wedding to have progressed so far, and that would be infamous. She says he could not have married her in the certainty that he was not going to love her, and that he should not have condemned her so soon.

Poirier, coming in and finding Antoinette agitated, thinks she is feverish. Upon learning what has disturbed her he angrily takes the letter and breaks the seal. Even Verdelet tries to restrain him, but he reads as far as "Dear Gaston," and then drops the letter. Antoinette sinks in an armchair, half fainting, but recovers in a few minutes and goes to her room. Poirier is beside himself when Gaston returns, and asks if he is looking for something. If it is a letter from Madame de Montjay he has it in his pocket, and, furthermore, he has opened it.

Gaston declares that Poirier has committed a dishonest act. There is but one dishonest man present, returns Poirier, and that is his son-in-law. Gaston will not suffer any reproaches; in stealing the secret of his transgressions, he says, Poirier has forfeited the right to judge them. Poirier replies that Gaston may explain all that in court, for he means to bring a suit for a separation. The Marquis is aghast at the thought of Madame de Montjay's reputation being ruined through him, but Poirier insists that she shall be punished.

Gast. [*to* VERDELET]. Help me to prevent an irreparable misfortune, sir.

Verd. Ha! You don't know him!

Gast. [*to* POIRIER]. Take care, sir. I am going to save this woman. I am going to save her at any cost. You know that I am responsible for it all.

Poir. I know that well enough.

Gast. You do not know to what lengths I may be driven by desperation.

Poir. Oh, threats?

Gast. Yes, threats. Give me that letter, or you shall not go out from here.

Poir. Violence! Must I call the servants?

Gaston says he was losing his head, and asks Poirier to listen to him. He admits that his idleness has been his ruin. What if he should seek employment? Poirier has a right to doubt his word, but he may keep the letter, and if Gaston fails in his promise there will still be time to resort to extreme measures.

Verd. Come, Poirier, that's a guarantee.

Poir. A guarantee of what?

Verd. Of his fidelity to his promises. He will not see this lady again; he will take employment; he will devote himself to the happiness of your daughter. What more could you ask?

Poir. I understand that all right, but who will be answerable for it?

Verd. The letter! Good heavens, the letter!

Poir. That's true, yes. That's true.

It remains only to submit the agreement to Antoinette for her approval. Gaston tells Hector that Pontgrimaud would render him a service by killing him. He says he is done for; the slave of a father-in-law whose tyranny is justified, the husband of a woman whom he has wounded to the heart and who will never forgive him. He is disgusted with himself and everything else. His folly has lost him his liberty, domestic happiness, and the respect of society and of himself. Poirier and Verdelet come back with Antoinette.

Ant. No, father, no, it is impossible! All is over between Monsieur de Presles and me.

Verd. I no longer recognize you when you talk so, my child.

Poir. But when I tell you that he will take an occupation! That he will never see this woman again! That he will make you happy!

Ant. There can no longer be any happiness for me! If Monsieur de Presles did not love me voluntarily, do you think he will love me under compulsion?

Poir. [*to the* MARQUIS]. Speak, sir.

Ant. Monsieur de Presles is silent; he knows that I should not believe his protestations. He knows, too, that every tie between us is broken, and that he can no longer be anything but a stranger to me. Let us both have what liberty the law can restore to us. I desire a separation, father. Give me this letter. It is I, I alone, who have the right to make use of it. Give it to me!

Poir. I beg you, my child, think of the scandal that will bespatter everybody.

Ant. It will soil only the guilty.

Verd. Consider this woman whom you are going to ruin forever.

Ant. Has she had pity on me? Father, give me that letter. It is not your daughter who demands it, but the outraged Marchioness de Presles.

Poir. There it is. . . . But since he will take an occupation . . .

Ant. Give it to me. [*To the* MARQUIS.] I hold the means of vengeance, sir, and it shall not elude me. You have pledged your honor to save your mistress; I release it and give it back to you. [*She tears up the letter and throws it in the fire.*]

Poir. Why! What has she done?

Ant. My duty!

Verd. My good child! [*He kisses her.*]

Duke. Generous act!

Gast. Oh, Madame, how can I express myself to you? In my pride I thought I had made a misalliance. You keep my honor better than I! My whole life would not be too much in reparation for the wrong I have done.

Ant. I am a widow, sir.

She takes Verdelet's arm and goes out.

The next day Verdelet attempts to bring about a reconciliation, but both Antoinette and her father are firmly op-

posed to the thought of it. Antoinette says that Gaston has killed all the love she had for him, and that the only thing she asks is never to see him again. Poirier informs them that he has just shot another bolt into the Marquis by offering for sale the Château de Presles, the ancestral estate of the Marquis's family, which he bought some time before. He hopes that in a month this vestige of feudalism will no longer be a blemish on the soil of a free people. Beet roots will be planted on the site of the château, cottages will be built with its materials, and the woods in the park will be sawed up for fuel. He is going to see if the advertisements have been printed.

Gaston comes in without having waited to see if Antoinette will receive him. He tells her that he wishes to say good-bye, as he is going to Africa with Hector to join the army. He regrets having troubled her life, but reminds her that war has fortunate chances. Hector, who has followed his friend, assures Antoinette that Gaston loves her, but she makes a scornful reply. Gaston says his fate is deserved. Antoinette was worthy of the purest love, and he married her for her money; he made a bargain, but was not honest enough to keep it; she saved his honor twice before his blind heart was opened. He has lost everything, he concludes, and she is right to despise him.

Duke. As your wife no longer loves you, it may be permissible to tell her. . . . Madame, he is going to fight a duel.

Ant. Ah! Tony, his life is in danger. . . .

Duke. What does it matter to you, Madame? Is not everything over between you?

Ant. Yes, yes, I know it, everything is over. . . . Monsieur de Presles can dispose of his life. . . . He no longer owes anything to me. . . .

Duke [*to* GASTON]. Come on, come. [*They go as far as the door.*]

Ant. Gaston!

Duke. You see that she still loves you!

Gast. [*throwing himself at her feet*]. Ah! Madame, if it is true, if I am not entirely effaced from your heart, say one word. . . . Give me the desire to live.

Poirier comes in again, and hearing the duel mentioned says he is not surprised, for mistresses and duels are in

keeping: the one leads to the other. Antoinette asks Gaston to deny the imputation. He answers that he cannot lie; the duel is all that remains of an odious past.

Ant. And they say that you love me! . . . And I was ready to pardon you at the moment when you were going to fight for your mistress! . . . They were setting a trap for my weakness with this last offence. . . . Ah! Monsieur de Monteyran!

Duke. He told you, Madame, that this duel is a legacy of the past which he detests and wishes to annihilate.

Verd. [*to the* MARQUIS]. Well, sir, this is very simple. If you no longer love Madame de Montjay, do not fight for her.

Gast. What, sir, make excuses!

Verd. It is a question of giving Antoinette a proof of your sincerity. It is the only one that you can offer her. Besides, did you not ask her just now as a favor to impose some form of atonement upon you? Time was the only proof to which one could put you. Shouldn't you be happy to make a sacrifice which acquits you in an instant? What is asked is a great deal, I know; but if it were less could it redeem your misdoings?

Poir. [*aside*]. Here's this imbecile going to reconcile them!

Gast. I would gladly sacrifice my life to make reparation, but my honor. . . . The Marchioness de Presles would not accept it.

Ant. And if you are mistaken, sir, if I demand it?

Gast. What, Madame, you would exact that?

Ant. That you should do for me almost as much as for Madame de Montjay? Yes, sir. You consented for her to ignore your family's past, and for me you will not renounce a duel . . . a duel which offends me? How can I believe in your love if it is not so strong as your vanity?

Poir. Besides, you'd be so much better off for coming in for a bad wound! Believe me, prudence is the mother of safety.

Verd. [*aside*]. Old serpent!

Gast. That is what people would say, Madame.

Ant. Who would dare to doubt your courage? Haven't you given proof of it?

Poir. What do you care for the opinion of a crowd of fops? You will have the esteem of my friends, that ought to suffice.

Gast. You see, Madame, I should be laughed at. You would not care long for a man who was ridiculous.

Duke. No one will laugh at you. I will take the excuses myself, and I promise you that they will not be pleasing.

Gast. What, you are of the same opinion?

Duke. Yes, my friend. Your duel is not one that cannot be prevented, and the sacrifice which is acceptable to your wife will only affect your self-esteem.

Gast. Excuses at the place of meeting!

Poir. I will attend to it, I . . .

Verd. Decidedly, Poirier, you wish to force your son-in-law to fight.

Poir. I! I'm doing everything I can to prevent it.

Duke. Come, Gaston, you haven't the right to deny this proof of love to your wife.

Gast. Well! . . . No! . . . It's impossible.

Ant. My pardon is at this price.

Gast. Keep it, then, Madame. I shall not endure my despair very long.

Poir. Ta, ra, ta, ta. Don't listen to him, little girl. When he has his sword in his hand he will fight in spite of himself. It's like an expert swimmer wanting to drown himself. Once in the water, the devil can't keep him from striking out.

Ant. If Madame de Montjay forbade you to fight, you would obey her. Good-bye.

Gast. Antoinette. . . . In the name of heaven!

Duke. She is a thousand times right.

Gast. Make excuses! I!

Ant. Ah, you are all pride!

Duke. Come, Gaston, you are doing violence to yourself. I swear to you that in your place I should not hesitate.

Gast. Eh! Well . . . To a Pontgrimaud! Go without me.

Duke [*to* ANTOINETTE]. Well, Madame, are you satisfied with him?

Ant. Yes, Gaston, all is expiated. I no longer have anything to pardon you for. I believe you. I am happy. I love you. [*The* MARQUIS *stands motionless, his head bowed.* ANTOINETTE *goes to her husband, takes his head*

in her hands and kisses him on the forehead.] And now, go and fight! Go!

Gast. Oh, my dear wife, you have my mother's heart!

Ant. That of my own, sir.

Poir. How silly the women are, my God!

Gast. [*to the* DUKE]. Come, quick, we shall be there last.

Ant. You are a good swordsman, are you not?

Duke. Like Saint George, Madame, and a wrist of steel. Monsieur Poirier, pray for Pontgrimaud.

Ant. [*to* GASTON]. Do not go and kill this poor young man.

Gast. He shall get off with a scratch, since you love me. Come, Hector.

A servant comes in with a letter. Gaston tells Antoinette to open it. She does, and finds it is from Pontgrimaud, who writes:

"My dear Marquis: We have both given proofs of our courage. I do not hesitate, therefore, to tell you that I regret a moment of hastiness. You are the only man in the world to whom I should consent to make excuses, and I do not doubt that you will accept them in the spirit of gallantry in which they are made."

Verd. [*to* GASTON]. All turns out for the best, my dear fellow. I hope chastened by it.

Gast. Forever, my dear Monsieur Verdelet. From to-day I enter upon a quiet and serious life, and to break irrevocably with the follies of my past, I ask for a place in your office.

Verd. In my office! You, a gentleman!

Gast. Haven't I to support my wife?

Poir. [*aside*]. My turn to give in. [*Aloud.*] These sentiments are truly liberal. You are worthy of being a bourgeois. We shall be able to understand each other. Let us make peace, and you remain with us.

Gast. To make peace I am very glad. As for remaining here, that is another matter. You have made me understand the happiness of the charcoal burner who is master in his own house.

Poir. And you are going to take my daughter? You will leave me alone in my corner?

Ant. I shall come to see you, father.

Gast. And you will always be welcome at my house.

Poir. My daughter going to be the wife of a commission merchant!

Verd. No, Poirier. Your daughter will be the mistress of the Château de Presles. The château was sold this morning, and with your husband's permission, Toinon, it will be my wedding present.

Ant. Good Tony! You will permit me to accept, Gaston?

Gast. Monsieur Verdelet is one of those toward whom it is pleasant to feel gratitude.

Verd. I shall give up business, and with your permission, will retire and help you cultivate your land. You, Poirier, buy an estate near us. You have nothing to do, as you are cured of your ambition, I think.

Poir. Yes, yes. [*Aside.*] This is 1846. I shall be Deputy from de Presles in '47 . . . and peer of France in '48.

THE DEMI-MONDE

By Alexandre Dumas the Younger

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Gymnase on March 20, 1855.

Argument: Olivier de Jalin is unwilling to marry Marcelle de Sancenaux, with whom he is in love, because she has been thrown much among women whose reputations are bad, and he tries to prevent Raymond de Nanjac from marrying one of these women by exposing her past. His efforts result in a quarrel with Raymond, who finally challenges him to a duel, and he makes a will in favor of Marcelle. Does he succeed in preventing Raymond's marriage without either of them being killed, and does he overcome his scruples against marrying Marcelle?

The Viscountess de Vernières, although no longer young, felt some hesitation in calling upon Olivier de Jalin as it is said that he sometimes receives bad company. He assures her that his visitors are all friends of her own. The object of her visit is to ask Olivier that her name shall not be connected even indirectly with the duel between M. de Maucroix and M. de Latour, as she cannot afford to have it known that she permits gambling at her house.

This matter disposed of to her satisfaction, the Viscountess reminds Olivier that he has not asked for news of her niece, Marcelle de Sancenaux, who charged her with a number of agreeable things to say to Olivier, in a purely amiable spirit, knowing perfectly well that he does not wish to marry her. As a man of good birth and some means, and not hampered by family ties, he is eminently eligible. The fact that Marcelle is an orphan is a distinct inducement to him, and, at one time, he admits, he entertained a fear that he might marry her.

Olivier. I was quite ingenuously enamored of her, and

if I had kept on going to your house, as I am an honorable man, I should finally have asked you for her, which would have been folly.

Viscountess. Because she has no fortune?

Oliv. That made no difference to me. I am not the man to make a mercenary marriage. No, there was another reason.

Visc. What?

Oliv. We men of the world are not so stupid as we seem. When we marry it is to find in a wife what we have found lacking in the wives of others, and the more we have seen of life the more store we set by having the woman we marry know nothing of it.

He does not hesitate to tell Madame de Vernières that she made a mistake when Marcelle left boarding-school not to have entrusted her to the care of M. de Thonnerins, who has a daughter of the same age. Then she would be in conventional society and would be sure to make a good marriage, which he doubts now if she will ever do.

Visc. I loved her too much to part from her.

Oliv. Egoism which you will regret later, and for which she will reproach you one of these days.

Visc. No, for if she wishes she will be married in two months, and she will be a charming wife. Wives are what their husbands make them.

Oliv. But husbands are also what their wives make them, and the compensation is insufficient. And to whom are you going to marry her this time?

The Viscountess has her eye on a handsome young officer who has a good income and no family except a sister, and who knows no one in Paris but M. Latour, herself, and Marcelle. His name is Raymond de Nanjac. M. de Nanjac has already called on Olivier in the capacity of Latour's second. Madame de Vernières begs him if he becomes friends with M. de Nanjac not to say any such stupid things as he has just been saying to her.

Madame Valentine de Santis calls by appointment with Madame de Vernières to take her home in her carriage. She is a far different person from her friend, young, fascinating, light-headed, and in Olivier's opinion a deplorable companion for Marcelle. Furthermore, she has almost entirely squandered her private fortune and counts on

exacting money from her husband, with whom she has not been living for ten years, by imposing on his good nature if possible and otherwise by recourse to law. She boasts that he has always been in love with her.

Valentine asks Olivier if he has heard from Madame d'Ange since she went to Baden. He denies that he has, but Valentine says she knows better for a very good reason, declaring that she herself mailed letters that Madame d'Ange wrote to him.

As Valentine is leaving with Madame de Vernières she asks Olivier to go with them to see a new apartment that she is furnishing, but he tells her he is expecting a friend who has just come back to Paris after an absence of ten years, Hippolyte Richond, whose father amassed wealth at Marseilles in the oil trade. A strange look comes into Valentine's face, but she quickly recovers herself.

Hippolyte Richond enters before the ladies have left, and no sooner has the door closed on them than he asks who they are. He can inform Olivier that Santis was not the name of the younger woman's husband, but her own maiden name, and says that he knew her husband very well. The husband discovered that she was the mistress of the man who brought about the match between them, killed the man in a duel, settled two hundred thousand francs on her, and never saw her again.

Olivier enlightens Hippolyte regarding Madame de Vernières, the remains of a woman of quality who has been dragged down little by little through a craving for luxury and amusement into an easy-going set. A widow for some years, her only resources are a few old friends, buying stocks at par and selling them at a premium, and the flotsam and jetsam of her wrecked fortune which the wind brings from time to time to the shores of the present day.

The Viscountess counts upon regilding her scutcheon by marrying off her pretty niece, but she cannot find the husband. In the meantime she is putting up as stiff a fight as she can. She entertains, when every one knows that the next day she will have to pawn some jewelry to pay for the punch and ices. The young men whom she invites eat the ices, drink the punch, send bonbons on New Year's Day, marry girls in society, and upon meeting the Viscountess and her niece touch their hats with the tips of

their fingers to avoid introducing them to their mothers and wives.

Olivier gives a letter that he has written to a servant to deliver, and tells Hippolyte that it is to a Mme. de Lornan, with whom, for the most commendable reasons, he is refusing to carry on a flirtation. It appears, however, that he is "Joseph" in this instance because he means to continue his "affair" with Madame d' Ange when she returns from Baden.

This lady, whose name he does not reveal to Hippolyte, passes for a widow without being one and is still in her twenties. She dresses marvellously, is clever, and knows how to preserve appearances. The present has no dangers for her, the future no regrets, for she foresees every eventuality and smilingly guides a love affair of convenience as far as the relay where the horses are changed. He has assumed this relationship as a traveller who is in no hurry takes the stage coach instead of the railroad. It is much more gay, and stops when one wishes.

Hippolyte has just gone when Suzanne d'Ange comes to see Olivier. He is rather surprised to learn that she returned from Baden a week before, and much more surprised when she asks if he wishes to marry her. She tells him not to betray too much astonishment, and changes the subject without his having answered. There is one thing more that she has to say. They will not meet again as she is going to leave Paris. She will not tell him why she is going away, and exacts his promise that he will be her friend if occasion should ever arise for him to prove that he is discreet.

The servant announces M. de Nanjac.

Suzanne. There are strange coincidences sometimes!

Oliv. What has happened?

Suz. How can I get out without being seen?

Oliv. You know very well. How agitated you are! Do you know M. de Nanjac?

Suz. He was presented to me at Baden. I have spoken to him two or three times.

Oliv. Ho! Ho! It seems that I am getting warm, as they say in parlor games.

She changes her mind about beating a retreat, and tells Olivier to let M. de Nanjac come in. Raymond de Nanjac

enters, starts to speak to Olivier at once, and then upon seeing Suzanne betrays astonishment and emotion.

Suzanne remains only long enough to ask Raymond when he came back from Baden and to say that she will be glad to see him. As soon as she has left the room Raymond turns to Olivier very stiffly and proceeds at once to the subject of the quarrel between M. Latour and M. de Maucroix. M. de Latour, having lost considerable money, said that he would play on credit, and thereupon M. de Maucroix laid down his hand, saying he passed. M. de Latour saw in this act a refusal to accept his word as being as good as money.

Olivier says that his friend's hand was bad, but Raymond is very uncompromising and insists that M. de Maucroix would have played if M. de Latour's money had been on the table. Finally, charged by Olivier with trying to pick a quarrel on his own account, he changes his tone and asks if he may speak frankly. He wishes to know what Mme. d'Ange was doing there if she is a respectable woman. Olivier satisfies him by pointing out that she might have gone out by the side door without being seen if she had had anything to conceal.

When Hippolyte comes again Olivier is able to tell him that the duel can be avoided. Hippolyte has received an invitation from Mme. de Vernières to come to her house Wednesday evening to meet Mme. de Santis. He thinks that Mme. de Santis probably wishes to talk to him about her husband. Olivier says he will go with him in order to observe at close quarters the signs of an intrigue which he thinks is brewing there.

On Wednesday evening Mme. de Vernières has to go out for a while to take measures to avoid being evicted from her apartment, and asks Mme. d'Ange to entertain her guests until her return, entrusting to her especially the furtherance of her cherished project of a match between M. de Nanjac and Marcelle.

The first visitor is the Marquis de Thonnerins, whom Mme. d'Ange asked to meet her there. It is to him that she owes her position in a world which she says is a dethronement for those who come from above, and a summit for those who come from the lower classes. At the present

moment she must either fall lower or rise again by means of a marriage. The Marquis does not wish to know the man's name. It might place him in a difficult position if he happened to know him.

For safety, Mme. d'Ange means to leave France and her past with it, but in order that her marriage may not seem to be due to material considerations she must have a fortune equal to her husband's. The Marquis has been supplying her with fifteen thousand francs a year, and now assures her of sufficient means to provide that amount in the future. He regards such an act as merely discharging his obligations.

Suz. I shall owe you everything, even the happiness which comes to me from another.

Marquis. A clever woman is never indebted to anybody.

Suz. An indirect reproach.

Marq. A mutual discharge. [*He kisses her hand.* Make my excuses to the Viscountess. [*He goes out.*

Raymond is delighted to find Suzanne alone. When he tells her that he has resigned from the army to be free to go anywhere with her she asks if he will not regret it in a year, or possibly in a month.

Raymond. You treat me like a child! I was ten, Suzanne, when I lost my mother whom I adored, and however young one may be, when one loses his mother he becomes old at once. Do you think that life in camps, that long days in the wilderness, braving death every day, the memory of my best friends who have fallen about me, has not hastened my thoughts and made me live twice my years? I have gray hairs, Suzanne. Love me.

Suz. If I loved you and you doubted me, as you did when you saw me at M. de Jalin's where I went to talk about you; if I had to struggle constantly against your suspicions, against your jealousy, what would become of me?

Ray. What I told Olivier proves my love. Where is the man loving sincerely who would allow the woman he loved to be suspected? Love does not exist without esteem.

There can be no true happiness, she tells him, unless no one knows it, and for that reason she asks him not to

tell any one they are going to be married, not even his sister or Olivier, for whom he has conceived a strong friendship in the last few days.

Olivier comes with Hippolyte, and as soon as he has an opportunity to speak privately to Suzanne he asks her if Raymond loves her. She denies that he has spoken to her of the subject, or that she loves him, a little even, a great deal, passionately, or at all.

When the Viscountess has returned, Marcelle comes into the drawing-room with her.

Marcelle. Monsieur Olivier, lend me M. de Nanjac a moment. I will return him. [*To* RAYMOND.] I want to speak to you, but first take out my hat pin. Now tell me, M. de Nanjac, do you know that there is a conspiracy against you?

Ray. Truly, mademoiselle?

Mar. Yes, they want you to marry me.

Ray. But . . .

Mar. No gallantry. You don't want to be my husband any more than I want to be your wife. You love some one who is ever so much nicer than I am. I have guessed it. I shan't speak of it. Now that you have nothing to fear, come with me. My aunt will think that you are paying court to me. That will please her. One has to do something for one's relatives, but I am good natured and warn unfortunates who do not know that they are being managed. Mind you don't spoil my hat. I know it hasn't been paid for. [*She goes out laughing with* RAYMOND.

The Viscountess is gratified to see things going so well. Olivier confides in Hippolyte that he is going to try to rescue Raymond from Suzanne d'Ange at the risk of regretting it later.

Valentine now arrives, and having whispered to the Viscountess that she had some difficulty in getting away from M. de Latour, who tried to keep her in, she buttonholes Hippolyte and takes care that no one overhears when she asks what he intends to do for her. He states flatly that he will do nothing for her. For years he waited vainly for a word from her heart, a tear of repentance. Now she is dead to him. In that case, she says, he will be responsible for what is going to happen.

To open Raymond's eyes, Olivier asks Mme. de Ver-

nières why she receives such a man as M. de Latour, a professional gambler who is not received in respectable society, and then questions Mme. de Santis regarding the means by which she hopes to extort money from her husband. Marcelle comes to the rescue and bids him stop talking.

Oliv. From the moment when you begin I have no more to say. I speak only of things which I understand, and knowing nothing about dollies and playing house I do not talk to little girls.

Mar. You say that to me?

Oliv. Yes, mademoiselle.

Mar. I talk of the same things as you. When important personages discuss certain things before little girls, the little girls have a right to take part in the conversation. Besides, I am no longer a little girl.

Oliv. What are you then, mademoiselle?

Mar. I am a woman and I talk like a woman!

Oliv. You might almost say like a man.

Mar. Monsieur!

Valentine. I should have been surprised if you hadn't ended by being impertinent.

Visc. [*taking away* MARCELLE]. You went too far, Monsieur de Jalin. This child did nothing to you. Another time if you have to be disagreeable to some one remember that in my house you are to be disagreeable only to me. Come, Marcelle. Are you coming with us, M. de Nanjac?

Raymond stops to ask Olivier for a more direct explanation of the people who surround them. Olivier likens their friends to peaches which, although fair to outward view, are not classed with the best, the reason being that a close inspection will detect a blemish in each.

Oliv. With the same origin, the same exterior, and the same prejudices as women in society, they find that they are no longer in it but compose the "demi-monde."

Ray. Where is this world to be seen particularly?

Oliv. Everywhere, indistinctly, but a Parisian recognizes it on sight.

Ray. By what is it recognizable?

Oliv. By the absence of husbands. It is full of women who are really married but whose husbands are never seen.

Ray. But where does this strange set come from?

Oliv. It is of modern creation. Formerly adultery as we understand it did not exist. Manners were much easier, and to represent the thing which we call adultery to-day there was a much more trivial word, one employed by Molière, which ridiculed the husband more than it blamed the woman. But since husbands, armed with the civil code, have had the right to eject their wives from the bosoms of their families for forgetting their pledges, a change has been brought about in marital relations which has created a new class, that of all the women who have been compromised or repudiated.

Girls who have made their début in life by a mistake, pretended widows, women going under the names of men with whom they live, all go to swell the ranks of this class, explains Olivier, and this bastard society has much charm for young men because love is easier of attainment in it than in higher circles and less expensive than in the lower. On the many-colored surface of this world, gilded by youth, beauty, fortune, the most sinister dramas and painful expiation are brewing, scandal, ruin, and dishonor.

Olivier, having expatiated at some length, particularly on the forbidding aspect of the half world's seamy side, is somewhat startled at Raymond's cool remark that Mme. d'Ange has told him the same thing. She explained to him that she saw these people occasionally on account of friendships contracted in other days, and furthermore she is going to put an end to those relations in a manner which will be a great surprise to Olivier when it comes about at the end of eight days.

Marcelle returns to tell Raymond that Mme. d'Ange wishes to see him, and then informs Olivier that she has something to say to him. He made her cry a little while ago and she asks what his object was. After some temporizing he comes to the point.

Oliv. A young girl must be a young girl, and must occupy herself only with things which are proper for her age. But there are moments when I find your conversation embarrassing and I don't know how to answer. I used to be sorry to see you being brought up in this bad company, and to hear you speak of such things as you spoke of a while ago.

Mar. Then your severity was due to interest. Thanks. But what should be done. I cannot leave the surroundings

in which I live. I have no father and no mother. The language which I speak is that which I have heard for a number of years. May it not be that it is not a misfortune for me to have lived in these surroundings? From seeing every day what a woman comes to as a result of her first mistake I have learned not to make this mistake.

Oliv. That is true.

Mar. But that does not suffice, it seems, especially for the future. Well, as you are interested in me I ask your advice.

Oliv. Speak, then.

Mar. A girl like me, without family, without fortune, without other protector than a relative like Madame de Vernières, brought up in the world in which I find myself, if she wishes to avoid these influences, escape suppositions, resist bad counsel and discouragement, how should she act? [*A pause.*] You do not answer? You may pity me, blame me even, but you cannot advise me. Can I say now that I am no longer a little girl?

Oliv. [*moved*]. Pardon me.

Mar. I will do more than pardon you. I will thank you for having opened my eyes before it was too late. Only I shall ask of you, whatever happens, if you hear me slandered to defend me a little, and in exchange I will promise to find the means to remain an honest woman. Perhaps some day I shall find an honest fellow who will take a liking to me.

Suzanne is preparing to leave her house when Marcelle comes to ask a favor. Mme. de Vernières has just threatened to refuse Marcelle further support because she will make no effort to ensnare M. de Nanjac, and having nowhere to turn Marcelle thought of asking Suzanne to see if M. de Thonnerins would not renew his offer of an asylum in his home with his daughter. Suzanne promises to ask the Marquis that very day.

Olivier, coming to return Suzanne's letters at her request, meets Raymond, who has regretted not having told Olivier the truth and now avows that he is going to marry Suzanne. Olivier begs him to delay the wedding. In fact, he says, if he may give advice in a serious situation, there is no need for one to marry Suzanne; it isn't done. For a time

all hints seem utterly lost on Raymond. Finally a light dawns on him, and in the reaction of the moment he declares that he no longer loves the woman. Olivier assures him that if he desires further proof he has only to apply to M. de Thonnerins, who can convince him that the Baron d'Ange never existed.

Raymond thinks that the letters which Olivier is returning would furnish proof against Suzanne, and insists so upon seeing them that Olivier fears Raymond is never going to forgive him for having warned him. He leaves the letters on a table and says he will come back in half an hour to see Suzanne. Raymond does not look at the letters. Suzanne returns with documents establishing the facts of her birth and marriage and the death of her husband. She thinks Raymond distracted. He asks her to write something and finds it almost illegible. Then he tells her that Olivier has left some letters for her. "Letters?" she asks. "What letters?"

Raymond shows her the packet which Olivier left, and she tells him to break the seal and look at them himself, declaring that she does not know what they are. The letters, which are unsigned, are written in a very legible and elegant hand, bearing no resemblance to Suzanne's.

Ray. Then why this lie of Olivier's, and above all why his air of truth?

Suz. What lie? Let's see what this means? Did M. de Jalin tell you that I wrote those letters?

Ray. Yes.

Suz. [*indignant*]. But then M. de Jalin must have been my lover?

Ray. So it seems.

Suz. Did he tell you so?

Ray. He let me think so.

Suz. Where's the joke?

Ray. M. de Jalin doesn't joke.

Suz. He's made game of you. You told him a lie yesterday. He found it out, and to-day he has taken his revenge. I have known M. de Jalin longer than you; I know he is incapable of a cowardly act, and what you accuse him of is one. He has paid me court; I've had letters from him; I can show them to you; I think he sees me marrying with regret because it takes away all his hope; but from

that to trying to prevent the marriage by a falsehood is a long way. I don't know what has happened, but I declare M. de Jalin incapable of such an action.

Ray. We shall see.

Suz. Do you doubt it.

Ray. It must be settled between him and me. You must swear that nothing that he has said is true?

Suz. An oath? Ah, there was something besides a joke in this. There was a falsehood, there was treason on your part.

Ray. Treason!

Suz. Yes, you regret the engagement which you entered into with me, but it would have been much simpler to have told me so frankly than to have called such a means to your aid, which does more honor to your ingenuity than to your delicacy.

Ray. You accuse me of infamy, Suzanne.

Suz. Of what do you accuse me?

Ray. M. de Jalin is coming. We will shed light on the subject in his presence.

Suz. What! You need his permission to believe in my honesty? I am to have him tell you that he hasn't been my lover, and you will believe it only under these circumstances? Who do you take me for? I loved you, Raymond, but I confess your suspicious and jealous character frightens me. I hesitate on that account to become your wife. Nevertheless, I believe at least that you esteem me. I do not wish to seek the reasons and causes of what has happened. You have subjected my love and my dignity to a humiliating trial. You have doubted me. All is over between us.

Ray. But my jealousy is a proof of my love. I love you so, Suzanne!

Suz. I do not wish to be loved in that way.

They are interrupted by the arrival of Marcelle, and Raymond goes. Suzanne tells her servant that she will not be at home to M. de Nanjac if he comes again. She has to inform Marcelle that M. de Thonnerins refused her request.

Olivier's half-hour being up, he returns, and Suzanne tasks him with having told Raymond that it would be a mistake for him to marry her. She says it was a cowardly thing to do.

Suz. You didn't think he would repeat your conversation to me.

Oliv. I didn't think he would because he gave me his word.

Suz. You also gave me your word to be my friend.

Oliv. To be your friend, yes; to be your accomplice, no.

Suz. Accomplice is hard. [*Laughing.*] Tell me, Olivier.

Oliv. What?

Suz. Do you know that your measure turned out to my advantage?

Oliv. So much the better! In that way I have accomplished a duty on the one hand, and on the other I have done you a service.

Suz. He is more in love than ever.

She tells Olivier he has fallen into a trap. He might have guessed that something was on foot when she told him to bring the letters and then threw him and Raymond together while she was out. Then he played his rôle of honorable man, explaining what his relations had been with her, and left the letters within easy reach. The fact, however, that the letters were not in her handwriting convinced Raymond at once that she was the victim of a lie. He loved her more than ever, but she dismissed him in punishment for his suspicions. Nevertheless, he will be back in ten minutes, she says, and in eight days they will be married.

The explanation of the letters is that Suzanne let Mme. de Santis write to him for her from Baden. She did not even look at the letters. She accuses Olivier of acting really from pique in warning Raymond, and because she once loved him, of trying now to wreck the happiness of her whole life. When one has profited by somebody's weakness it is an injustice, she says, to use it as weapon against that person.

The maid says that M. de Nanjac has come back and insists upon seeing M. de Jalin, who he knows is there. Suzanne tells Olivier to receive him and say what he believes he ought to say, but to remember that Raymond loves her and she him, and that she wants what she wants.

Raymond enters brusquely and charges Olivier with having deceived him. He has seen Suzanne's marriage contract and the death certificate of her husband. He has

been to see M. de Thonnerins, who assured him that he knew of nothing against the Baroness d'Ange, and, finally, these letters were not written by her. Making use of the trick of the letters as an excuse, Olivier says that he was mistaken and has played the fool. He takes back everything, declaring even that Suzanne is entirely worthy.

M. de Thonnerins comes to see Suzanne to oppose her marriage to Raymond, who is closely related to his family by friendship. She forestalls him by telling him that she has voluntarily broken off the match, M. de Jalin having aroused Raymond's suspicions and made it impossible. She no longer loves Raymond, she says.

Suzanne and Mme. de Santis are planning a grand counterstroke against Olivier. Mme. de Santis has already been to see Mme. de Lornan, who she reports to have completely lost her head over Olivier, and to be ready to spread any scandal against Marcelle if they tell her it is necessary to prevent Olivier from marrying her. Mme. de Santis, who blames Olivier for turning her husband against herself, wishes that they could bring about a duel between him and M. de Nanjac, so that Olivier might receive a good sword-thrust.

Mme. de Vernières has been very much upset by a resolution that Marcelle has taken to leave her and support herself by teaching, an occupation which Mme. de Vernières considers beneath the dignity of a Sancenaux. Upon going to see Mme. d'Ange, she meets Olivier there with Hippolyte and blames him for Marcelle's decision.

The maid tells Suzanne that Mme. de Lornan is there to see her. Olivier goes out quickly and returns in a few minutes. Raymond asks him what he has done, and he replies that he told Mme. de Lornan that he did want her to come in there.

Ray. By what right?

Oliv. By the right of a gentleman to prevent a virtuous woman from compromising herself.

Suz. Especially when this virtuous woman is the mistress of this gentleman.

Oliv. You lie, Madame!

Ray. Sir, you are insulting a woman.

Oliv. For eight days, sir, you have been looking for a

chance to pick a quarrel with me, and I have come here to give you this opportunity. You think that a sword-thrust will cut the knot that binds you. Good for the sword-thrust. I am at your service.

Ray. In an hour, sir, my seconds will be at your house.

Oliv. Very good. I shall expect them.

First Raymond goes out, and then Olivier and Hippolyte. Mme. de Vernières begs Suzanne to prevent the duel, and Suzanne assures her that she will find a way to do so. When Mme. de Vernières has left, the maid brings Suzanne a letter from M. de Thonnerins. The letter says:

"You have deceived me. You have seen M. de Nanjac again, and the marriage which I told you was impossible you are trying to bring about in spite of my prohibition. I will give you an hour to break it off. If you have not found the means in an hour I will acquaint M. de Nanjac with everything."

Suzanne is writing an answer rapidly when Raymond returns. He is determined to fight the duel and wishes to write to his notary to arrange for his marriage at once so that he will have kept his promise to Suzanne whatever happens. She tells him there is no paper in the portfolio on which she has just been writing, but he has seen it.

If she permits him to look in the portfolio he will see the letter which she was writing to M. de Thonnerins, but his suspicions are awakened at her asking him not to open the portfolio and she says that she did not wish him to see all the things she was ordering for her trousseau. He does not consider that a reasonable thing for her to have been engaged upon while he was looking for his seconds, and insists upon knowing to whom she was writing.

Suz. Oh, so that's the case. Well, you shan't know. [*She opens the portfolio and takes out the letter.*]

Ray. Take care!

Suz. Threats! And by what right? Thank God, I'm not your wife yet. I'm in my own home here, free, the mistress of my actions as much as you are free and the master of yours. Do I question you? Do I meddle with your papers?

Ray. [*seizing her wrist*]. That letter.

Suz. You shan't have it, I tell you! I have never

yielded to violence. I told you the truth. You are free to suppose and believe whatever seems best to you.

Ray. I believe that you are deceiving me.

Suz. So be it!

Ray. [*in a threatening voice*]. Suzanne! . . .

Suz. Enough, sir! I give you back your word. I take back mine. There is no longer anything in common between us.

Ray. You have employed this means before, Madame. This time I shall stay.

Suz. What sort of a man am I dealing with?

Ray. You are dealing with a man who has asked you, in exchange for the honorable name which he will give you, only a moment's sincerity, and to whom you have sworn that you have nothing to reproach yourself for; who tomorrow will fight with a man whose honor he cannot doubt to sustain your honor which he does doubt; who for two weeks has been struggling with lies and duplicity without relying upon anything but loyalty, frankness, and confidence, and who is resolved now to know the truth by whatever means it may be had. If that letter does not contain it complete, I judge by your emotion that it contains at least a part of it. I must have that letter. Give it to me, or I shall take it.

Suz. [*crushing it in her hand and trying to tear it*]. You shall not have it.

Ray. [*squeezing her arm*]. That letter!

Suz. You will lay hands on a woman?

Ray. [*carried away*]. That letter!

Suz. Well, I don't love you. I never loved you! . . . I deceived you. Leave now.

Ray. That letter! [*He tries to open her hand by force.*]

Suz. Raymond, I will tell you everything . . . You hurt me . . . I am not guilty, by the name of your mother! . . . [*He tears the letter from her.*] Wretch! [*She falls exhausted on a chair.*] Well, read it. But I shall avenge myself. I swear it.

Ray. [*reading in a moved voice*]. "I beg you, do not destroy me. It is necessary for me to see you, and I will explain everything. What you command will be done. It is not my fault if M. de Nanjac loves me, and I love him. It is my excuse. I depend on you. Meanwhile,

be generous, pardon me. If he should know the truth I would die of shame. I promise you not to be his wife, but don't let him know anything. Wait until I shall be at liberty . . . " [*Speaking.*] And I still doubted! [*He hides his face in his hands.*] What have I ever done to you, Suzanne? Why should you deceive me? . . . Here, take your letter. Good-bye.

He starts to go out. Halfway to the door he lets himself drop in a chair and cannot restrain his tears. Suzanne declares that she loved him and wanted his esteem. Every woman would have done as she did, she says. She will tell him her whole life now. There was indeed a thing which she wished to conceal, but if he knew it he would find her less culpable than he imagines. She had no one to advise her, was without means, and she believes that he would have pardoned her if she had told him all. Nothing obliges her to tell him now, she reminds him, falling on her knees and taking his hand.

Suzanne confesses she owes to M. de Thonnerins everything that she has, and that she was never married but showed Raymond the papers of another woman. She denies, however, that she was more than a friend to Olivier, for that is the one thing which he would not pardon. He asks only one proof of her love, that she will return M. de Thonnerins' property, and she consents with an alacrity that completely satisfies him. She gives him the deeds to property that M. de Thonnerins gave her and tells him to return them.

The next day Olivier has put all his affairs in order in preparation for the duel when Hippolyte comes to propose a means of avoiding it. Raymond has said that he would consider Olivier perfectly justified in all that he has done if he should give his word of honor that Suzanne was his mistress. Olivier, however, can see no justification for his making such a confidence to Raymond, even if it were true. Hippolyte believes that Olivier is more in love with Suzanne than he lets it appear.

Among the letters which Olivier has written is one to Marcelle. His final request of Hippolyte is to see that Marcelle receives it, in case he falls, before she leaves Paris. Hippolyte has just left when Marcelle comes in. She re-

proaches Olivier for asking why she should come, and why she is agitated. She declares that she will warn a magistrate that a duel has been planned.

Oliv. And by what right?

Mar. The right of a woman to save the man she loves.

Oliv. You love me?

Mar. You know it well.

Oliv. Marcelle!

Mar. Who has had such influence over me as to make me change my whole life by a single word? Who has made me leave the surroundings in which I lived? For whom am I resigned to being buried in the depths of the provinces, and to gaining my living in sadness and obscurity? For whom was I going away without other consolation than the certainty of knowing that I was esteemed, and was going to be forgotten by you? . . . For whom does a woman transform herself except for the man she loves? But in the bottom of my heart I bore a hope. I said to myself: "Perhaps he seeks a proof. When he sees that I am virtuous, when he has made of me the woman he wishes me to be, perhaps he may love me, who knows?" And when I had given myself up to this dream I learned that you were going to fight a duel for a woman. And do you think that I shall allow this duel? She may permit it, the one you love. Let her. But I who love you? Never!

Oliv. Listen, Marcelle, I swear to you that if you take any steps, if you say a word to stop the duel, if you do stop it, that that would dishonor me, for they would say that I had made use of a woman in order not to fight. I swear to you, Marcelle, that I should not survive such dishonor.

There is a chance, however, that the duel may not take place, he tells her, for now that he knows she loves him he wishes to live. At this moment Hippolyte knocks on the door. She suspects that it is a signal to call Olivier away to the rendezvous.

Oliv. My seconds are in there. They are conferring with M. de Nanjac's seconds. They want to speak to me. That is why Hippolyte called me.

Mar. I am afraid.

Oliv. Listen, Marcelle. The dream you had may have been mine, too. I was happy and proud to develop the

good feelings which I divined in you. The mysterious instinct of happiness bore me toward you; I could not explain why I wanted to see you worthy in every respect; I did not know yet, but it was a need of my heart. That is all I can tell you, for when a man's life is at stake he has no right to speak of hope and the future.

Mar. Olivier!

Oliv. In an hour all will be arranged. In an hour I can explain myself. Before that nobody must find you at my house. Return to the Viscountess and wait for me there. We shall see each other again, I promise you. I shall be in there. I shall not go out except to go to see you.

Olivier has scarcely left her when Suzanne comes in. Marcelle says that Olivier has assured her that he will try to prevent the duel. Suzanne gives way to a momentary fury, suspecting that Olivier means to justify himself to Raymond at her expense, but she quickly regains her self-control, believing that Olivier is not the man to take such a course. She assures Marcelle that Olivier has deceived her and was only trying to gain time. Marcelle replies that he is in the next room. Suzanne opens the door and finds no one there.

Mar. I must find him! I must save him!

Suz. Where will you find him? Do you know where he is? And how save him? Wait. That's all we can do. Chance will play for us. Olivier and Raymond are fighting at this moment. There is no doubt of it. They are both brave; they hate each other; one will kill the other.

Mar. My God!

Suz. Now listen. Olivier has lied either to you or to me, for he has also told me that he loves me.

Mar. Told you! When?

Suz. Two hours ago. In a minute I may lose love, fortune, future. If Raymond survives I am saved. But if he falls the love of Olivier is my only resource. He must love me or I shall sink under my shame. You, too, hold by knowing the truth.

She says that if Olivier comes back he will not explain himself before both of them, and that it is therefore necessary for one of them to go into the other room. It is possible to listen behind the door. She says she is willing to be the one to go out. Just then they hear some one

coming. It is Olivier. Marcelle, thankful to know that he is alive, permits Suzanne to shove her into the other room.

Olivier enters and speaks to Suzanne in a weak voice. At her inquiry if he is wounded he replies that it is nothing. He obliges her to admit that he was right in the quarrel. Therefore, he says, Raymond's death is a misfortune, not a crime. She remains calm, waiting for him to go on. He declares that from the day when she came to tell him that she no longer loved him he was carried away by jealousy. He loved her with the strange and fatal passion which she always inspired.

It was not for any offence of Raymond's that he killed him, he says, but so that she may not be his; in a minute he has made her lose everything, and now he can belong only to her, she only to him. He asks her not to leave him and says they will go away together. She looks searchingly in his face and then agrees. He takes her in his arms, exclaiming, "At last!" Then he begins to laugh and says she has lost her bet.

Raymond and Hippolyte enter, and then Marcelle, who throws herself into Olivier's arms. Raymond thanks Olivier, and acknowledges that he has been a fool. He has received a slight wound and Olivier not any. He will not even speak to Suzanne, who is consumed with anger at Olivier.

Oliv. No grand words. When one has risked the lives and honor of two men one should be a good loser. I did well to deal a thrust, because the right was mine to prove the truth. It is not I who prevent your marriage. It is right, it is justice, it is the social law which sees that an honest man shall marry a virtuous woman. You have lost the game but saved your stake.

Suz. How is that?

Oliv. By this instrument Raymond restores the fortune which he made you give up. [*Showing her a document.*]

Suz. Give it to me! [*She tears open the envelope, looking at* RAYMOND.] What I wanted of him was his name and not his fortune. . . . In an hour I shall have left Paris. I shall be out of France. [RAYMOND *does not seem to hear her.*]

Oliv. But you no longer have anything. You gave back everything to the Marquis.

Sax. I don't know how it happened, but I was so upset when I gave the papers to M. de Nanjac that after he had gone I found the greater part of them on my table. Good-bye, Olivier. [*She goes out.*

Olie. Just to think that to have done good that woman would have had to have used only a small part of the intelligence that she devoted to evil!

Ray. [*to* MARCELLE]. You will be happy, mademoiselle. You will marry the most honorable man I know.

PERRICHON'S JOURNEY

By Eugène Labiche and M. E. Martin

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Gymnase on September 10, 1860.

Argument: Perrichon, a retired coach maker of Paris, takes his wife and pretty daughter to Switzerland and is followed by two suitors. One of the suitors rescued Perrichon on a glacier and the other is rescued by Perrichon. Which suitor does Perrichon favor, and which wins his daughter?

"This way! Don't get separated! We'd never find each other! Where's the baggage? Who has the umbrellas?"

It is the voice of M. Perrichon, the retired carriage manufacturer, raised suddenly on the concourse of the Lyons railroad station in Paris, as he rushes forward dragging his wife and pretty daughter, Henrietta, in feverish agitation at setting out upon a long-contemplated trip to Switzerland, the first journey of his life.

Perrichon. My panama! . . . I left it in the cab! . . . Oh, no! I have it in my hand. . . . Heavens, how hot I am!

Mme. Perrichon. It's your own fault! You rushed us! You hustled us! I don't like to travel like that!

Per. It's getting off that's laborious. . . . Once we're in the train! . . . Wait here. I'll get the tickets.

Entrusting his panama to his daughter, Perrichon hurries to the ticket window. Henrietta bows to a young man, explaining that she met him the week before at a ball. He comes forward eagerly, inquires if the ladies are leaving town, and hazards the guess that they are going to Mar-

seilles. They are not. Neither are they going to Nice. His porter reminds him that he has barely time to attend to his baggage.

Another young man with whom Henrietta danced at the same ball also has the good fortune to catch sight of her, also thinks they may be going to Marseilles or to Nice, and withdraws hurriedly. Such is his haste that he collides with the first young man at the ticket window. Both bristle up, and then recognize each other.

Armand. Daniel!

Daniel. Armand!

Arm. Going away?

Dan. At once. Are you?

Arm. I, too.

Dan. Good! I've got some first-class cigars. . . . Where are you going?

Arm. My word, old boy, I haven't the least idea.

Dan. You don't mean it? I haven't either. I've got a ticket as far as Lyons.

Arm. Have you, really? So have I. I'm going to follow a charming young lady.

Dan. You! I am, too!

Arm. The daughter of a carriage maker.

Dan. Perrichon?

Arm. Perrichon!

Dan. It's the same one!

Arm. But I love her, my dear fellow.

Dan. I love her, too.

Arm. I want to marry her.

Dan. I wish to ask her in marriage . . . which is practically the same thing.

Arm. But we can't both marry her!

Dan. It's forbidden in France.

Arm. What's to be done?

Dan. Simple enough. Since we've started, let's go on, strive to please, pay court, each on his own hook.

Arm. Then it's a competition, a tournament.

Dan. A battle royal . . . and friendly. . . . If you're the winner . . . I submit. If I carry her off, you bear me no ill will.

Arm. It's a go. I accept.

Dan. Your hand before the fight.

Arm. And your hand afterward.
They shake hands and board the train.

At Montanvert, near the Mer de Glace, the suitors install themselves at the same inn as Mlle. Perrichon and her parents. There is every indication that the struggle between them will be a long one. Both, fortunately, are gentlemen of leisure, Daniel being the manager of a steamboat company and Armand a private banker. Fate, however, is soon to cast an extraordinary opportunity in Armand's path.

Perrichon, having ventured abroad on horseback, comes a crupper at the verge of a precipice and is only saved from rolling off into space by Armand's timely assistance. The news of the narrow escape and rescue creates great excitement at the inn. Mlle. Perrichon is fairly overcome with gratitude to the rescuer. As for Daniel, his hopes are so dashed that he decides to abandon the struggle at the outset and go back to Paris. He even undertakes to sound Perrichon in behalf of his rival.

Per. Certainly, certainly. It was a very pretty thing that he did.

Dan. Yes, indeed!

Per. My gratitude will end only with my life. Ha! So long as the heart of Perrichon beats. But between you and me, the service he did me is not so great as my wife and daughter try to make it.

Dan. Really?

Per. Yes, it went to their heads. But you know how women are.

Dan. Nevertheless, when Armand stopped you you were rolling. . . .

Per. I was rolling, that is true. But with surprising presence of mind I saw a little fir tree that I was going to cling to. I had hold of it already when your friend reached me.

Dan. [*aside*]. Wait, wait! We shall see that he saved himself all alone.

Per. I am not the less grateful to him for his good intention. I count on seeing him again. I shall ask him to call next winter.

It seems that similar accidents have not been unknown.

Perrichon has heard that the season before a Russian prince who was a very good rider fell down the same hole. The guide pulled him out, and the prince gave the man a hundred francs.

Dan. It was well paid for.

Per. I think so, indeed. However, it's what it's worth.

Dan. Not a sou more. [*Aside.*] Ha! But I shan't go.

Per. I'm expecting a guide to take me up on the glacier. The ladies are not coming, but I shall count on you.

Dan. And on Armand?

Per. If he wishes to be one of us. I shall certainly not refuse the company of Monsieur Desroches.

The innkeeper asks Perrichon to write something in the visitors' book. After reflecting, Perrichon writes: "How little is man when one contemplates him from the top of the *mère* de Glace." Daniel notices that he has written mère instead of mer, but holds his tongue.

Scarcely has Perrichon left the room when another guest, Major Mathieu, inspects the book and perceives the mistake. He jots down below: "I must observe to M. Perrichon that the Mer de Glace not having any children, the final *e* which he attributes to it becomes a grammatical outrage. *Signed*, Major Mathieu."

The Major inquires for M. Armand Desroches, to whom he wishes to explain a certain matter. Payment is overdue on a note of his and Armand's banking house has found it necessary to obtain a warrant for his arrest, but it is not on account of the note that Major Mathieu left Paris. He happens to be in love with a certain young person who seems to be totally unworthy of his devotion. As Armand is a bachelor it is easier for the Major to explain.

Major. I wish to get rid of her, so I start and travel two hundred leagues. I come to the Mer de Glace, and I'm not sure of not going back to-night to Paris. It's stronger than I am! Love at fifty, you know. It's like rheumatism. Nothing cures it.

Arm. This confidence is not necessary to prevent pursuit. I will write to Paris at once.

Major [*quickly*]. Not at all! Don't write. I count on being locked up. It might be a way of getting cured. I haven't tried it yet.

Arm. Very well, if you like, Major . . .

Major. I beg you. At once. As soon as I get back.

Armand is willing to accommodate him.

Armand seeks an opportunity to inform Mme. Perrichon of his love for her daughter and his desire to make her his wife, but he is interrupted by a commotion that is caused by the return of the party from the glacier. There has been another rescue. Daniel fell into a crevasse and has been snatched from death by Perrichon.

Perrichon enters, followed by Daniel, who is supported by the innkeeper and a guide. Perrichon, deeply moved, calls for water, salt, and vinegar. He makes Daniel sit down. All are anxious to know what has happened.

Per. A frightful event. . . . Make him drink. Rub his temples.

Dan. Thanks. I feel better.

Arm. What has happened?

Dan. If it were not for M. Perrichon's courage . . .

Per. No, not you. Don't try to speak. It was horrible! We were on the Mer de Glace. Mont Blanc regarded us, calm and tranquil. For five minutes we had quietly followed a path that wound between the crevasses. I was ahead.

Mme. P. What imprudence!

Per. Suddenly I heard behind me a sound like a landslide. I turned. This gentleman had disappeared in one of the bottomless abysses, the mere sight of which makes one shudder. Then I, listening only to the call of courage, I, the father of a family, sprang to the rescue.

Mme. P. and Henrietta. Heavens!

Per. On the edge of the precipice I reached down with my alpenstock. He seized it, and pulled and pulled. We both pulled, and after a desperate struggle I snatched him from annihilation and brought him forth into the light of day before the Father of all.

Dan. Monsieur Perrichon, you have restored a son to his mother.

Per. True! And a man to society.

Dan. Words are powerless to express my gratitude.

Per. Daniel, my friend, my child! Your hand. . . . I owe you the sweetest emotions of my life. Without me you would have been only a formless and repulsive mass,

buried under the frost and rime. You owe everything to me, everything! I shall never forget it!

Dan. Nor I!

Per. [*to* ARMAND, *wiping his eyes*]. Ah, young man, you do not know the pleasure one experiences in rescuing a fellow creature.

Henrietta. But, papa, monsieur knows it very well as he has just . . .

Per. Ah, yes, that's so. Mr. Innkeeper, bring me the visitors' book.

Before leaving these regions Perrichon wishes to consecrate the event with a suitable inscription. When the book is brought everybody notices Major Mathieu's correction of Perrichon's grammar. Perrichon seizes the pen and writes: "The Major is a boor. Perrichon."

The carriage is announced to take Perrichon and his family to the station. Perrichon invites Daniel and Armand, who are returning to Paris, to drive with them. Mme. Perrichon takes him aside and informs him that Armand has asked their daughter's hand. He replies that Daniel has made the same overture to him.

It has just begun to rain in torrents and there is only room for four inside the carriage. Perrichon says that Daniel shall get in with them. Henrietta inquires in a low tone of her father how about M. Armand.

Per. [*low*]. Good lord, there are only four places! Let him get up on the box.

Hen. In such a rain!

Mme. P. A man who saved your life!

Per. I'll lend him my raincoat.

When the Perrichons return to their home in Paris Daniel and Armand have been there for a week or more and have been leaving their cards at the house every day. Mme. Perrichon thinks it high time that her husband came to a decision regarding the suitors.

Per. I haven't changed my opinion. I like Daniel best.

Mme. P. Why?

Per. I don't know . . . . I find him more . . . Well, he pleases me.

Mme. P. But the other rescued you.

Per. Rescued me! Always the same refrain!

Mme. P. What's the matter with him? He comes of good family, and he has an excellent position.

Per. Good lord, I don't find any fault with him. I don't want the fellow!

Mme. P. There's nothing else the trouble with him?

Per. Well, I think he's affected.

Mme. P. He?

Per. Yes, he assumes a protecting tone . . . gives himself airs . . . seems to be always preening himself on account of the little service he did me.

Mme. P. He never speaks of it.

Per. I know that well enough, but it's his air. His air says, "Without me . . ." It's provoking in time. But the other . . .

Mme. P. The other is always saying: "Ah, without you! Ah, without you!" That flatters your vanity, and there you are. That's why you prefer him.

Per. I—vanity! Maybe I've got the right to have it.

Mme. P. Oh!

Per. Yes, Madam. The man who has risked his life to save a fellow creature . . . but I prefer to seal my lips in modest silence . . . a characteristic sign of true courage!

Mme. P. But all that doesn't prove that M. Armand . .

Per. Henrietta doesn't like him, cannot like M. Armand.

Mme. P. What do you know about it?

Per. Goodness, I suppose . . .

Mme. P. There's a way of finding out. That is to ask her. And we will choose the one she prefers.

Per. Very well, but don't influence her.

Mme. P. Here she is.

Henrietta comes into the room.

Mme. P. Henrietta, my dear child, your father and I wish to talk seriously to you.

Hen. To me?

Per. Yes.

Mme. P. Here you'll soon be of an age to be married. Two young men have presented themselves to obtain your hand. Both of them are acceptable to us, but we do not wish to act against your will, and we have decided to leave you entire liberty of choice.

Hen. Really?

Per. Full and entire.

Mme. P. One of these young men is M. Armand Desroches.

Hen. Ah!

Per. [*quickly*]. Don't influence her!

Mme. P. The other is M. Daniel Savary. . . .

Per. A charming young man, distinguished, spiritual, and one whom I do not hesitate to say has all my sympathy.

Mme. P. But you are influencing her!

Per. Not at all! I was stating a fact. [*To* HENRIETTA.] Now you are enlightened, choose.

Hen. Heavens! You embarrass me too much. . . . I'm willing to take the one you decide on.

Per. No, no, decide yourself.

Mme. P. Speak, my child.

Hen. Well, since it's absolutely necessary to make a choice. . . . M. Armand.

Mme. P. There!

Per. Armand! Why not Daniel?

Hen. Armand rescued you, papa.

Per. Come, come! Again? This is a bore, on my word!

Mme. P. Well, you see, there is nothing to hesitate about.

Per. Ah, but permit me, my dear, a father cannot abdicate. I will reflect. I will take it under advisement.

Mme. P. Monsieur Perrichon, that is bad faith.

It is a relief to Perrichon when his friend Majorin drops in. He invites him to dinner, but John, the manservant, whispers in his ear that they are going to have veal stew, and he adds that the invitation is for another time. Majorin offers to return a loan of six hundred francs, as his steamboat dividend comes in the next day, but Perrichon, knowing this, is not in a hurry for the money.

Per. Do you know what I've done? I've brought you a present.

Major. A present! For me!

Per. Passing through Geneva, I bought three watches —one for John, one for Marguerite, the cook—and one for you, a repeater.

Major [*aside*]. He puts me after his servants! [*Aloud.*] Well?

Per. Before coming to the French custom house I put them in my cravat——

Major. What for?

Per. Ha! Well, I didn't want to pay the custom duties. They asked me, "Have you anything to declare?" I replied no; I made a movement and thereupon your devilish watch rang: ding, ding, ding!

Major. Well?

Per. Well, I was frisked. They took everything.

Major. How was that?

Per. There was an atrocious scene! I called the customs officer a miserable underling. He said I would hear from him again. I regret the incident very much. . . . Your watch was charming.

Major [*dryly*]. I do not thank you for it the less. [*Aside.*] As if he couldn't pay the duty. . . . It's sordid!

When Armand appears Mme. Perrichon and Henrietta receive him with great cordiality, and as Perrichon introduces him to Majorin casually as a mere acquaintance, Henrietta exclaims with vivacity that he saved her father's life. Perrichon has a peevish moment. Daniel arrives, however, and Perrichon has a chance to save the situation. He is about to recount his deed of heroism when Henrietta discovers it set forth in a newspaper.

It is a glowing encomium of the worthy manufacturer and father of a family, as well it may be, for Daniel has paid three francs a line to have it printed. He does not mention this fact. Mme. Perrichon suggests sending the story of Armand's fine act to the paper, and Henrietta thinks it would make a pretty pendant. At this moment John comes in with an official-looking document which he hands to Perrichon. It is a summons ordering Perrichon to appear in court to answer a charge of having abused a public officer engaged in the discharge of his duties.

Per. It's the customs officer who seized my three watches . . . I was too hasty . . . I called him an underling, and scum of the earth.

Major. It's very serious! Very serious! Fifteen days to three months in prison.

The family are horrified. Majorin points out that severity is necessary in order to make people pay the duties. Armand alone sees a ray of hope. He knows a high officer in the customs department and offers to see if the inspector cannot be induced to withdraw his complaint. He has no sooner started than Mme. Perrichon asks her husband what he thinks of Armand now. Perrichon replies glowingly that he is "an angel, an angel!"

Mme. P. And you hesitate to give him your daughter?

Per. No, I hesitate no longer.

She says he must tell Daniel, and goes out of the room with Henrietta.

Per. [*aside*]. This good young man . . . It gives me pain . . . Come, it has to be . . . My dear Daniel . . . My good Daniel . . . I have a painful communication to make to you.

Dan. Well, let's have it.

Per. You have done me the honor to ask the hand of my daughter. I have cherished this project, but circumstances . . . Your friend, Monsieur Armand, has rendered me such services . . .

Dan. I understand.

Per. For it's no use talking, he saved my life.

Dan. But this little fir tree that you grasped?

Per. Certainly, the little fir. It was very little. It might have broken. And then, I was no longer holding by it.

Dan. Ah!

Per. No, that is not all. At this very moment the excellent young man is burning the pavements to drag me from a dungeon. I owe him my honor, honor!

Daniel, apparently resigned, says that he will remember only Perrichon's courage and devotion to him. He cannot continue his visits at the house. It would be compromising for Mademoiselle Henrietta, and painful for him, but Perrichon's image will never leave him. He has decided to have the heroic scene on the Mer de Glace commemorated on canvas. He will engage one of the most illustrious painters. He asks if Perrichon is willing to pose. Perrichon is willing to give any number of sittings, but inquires if they are not to pose together.

Per. There I'll be, I and Mont Blanc, tranquil and majestic. But you! Where will you be?

Dan. In the hole. Down at the bottom. One will perceive only my two hands, clasped and supplicating.

Per. What a magnificent picture!

Dan. We will send it to the Exposition.

At the last moment, just as Daniel is about to go, Perrichon tells him to remain. He declares that nothing is decided about the marriage. He insists that Daniel shall remain. John announces Major Mathieu, who, upon entering, assures himself first that he is addressing the Perrichon who was at the Mer de Glace a month earlier.

Major. Then it was you who wrote in the hotel register, "The Major is a boor."

Per. What! You are . . .

Major. Yes, Monsieur, it is I.

Per. Enchanted! [*They exchange several little bows.*]

Major. Sir, I am neither quarrelsome nor a fencer, but I do not like to leave such expressions beside my name in hotel registers.

Per. But you wrote the first note, a more than sharp one.

Major. I? I limited myself to stating that Mer de Glace did not take an e at the end: look in the dictionary.

Per. Well, sir, you are not charged with correcting my mistakes . . pretended mistakes in spelling. Why are you concerning yourself about it?

Major. Pardon me. The French language is a beloved compatriot, a lady of good family, elegant, and a bit cruel . . . You know it better than any one.

In spite of Perrichon's irritation, the Major says he will give him the choice of two courses, but Perrichon retorts that he is not to be intimidated. He informs the Major that he has already given proof of his courage, as he will let the Major see . . . at the Exposition . . . next year.

Major. It will be impossible for me to wait until then. Come to the fact. Do you retract or not?

Per. Not in the least!

Major. Take care!

Daniel attempts to interpose to avert the catastrophe which he sees impending, but Perrichon does not heed, and the Major says abruptly he will await him the next day at noon, with his second, in the wood at Malmaison. The

fact is that Perrichon did not realize he was dealing with a military officer, but becomes a prey to the keenest apprehension as soon as the Major has withdrawn.

The situation presents an opportunity which Daniel immediately takes advantage of by writing to the Prefect of Police to have the affray averted. Perrichon has the discretion to take the same course, making his communication anonymous, and then calls Daniel to witness that in the face of this new danger he is perfectly calm. His wife, however, detects signs of his anxiety and worms the story out of him. She also writes secretly to the Prefect of Police to stop the duel. Henrietta has overheard the conversation between her parents and writes to Armand to come to the rescue again.

The next morning Perrichon is perfectly calm. He says so himself as he walks about the garden with Daniel, as calm as bronze. It is ten o'clock, and he has sent for a cab to convey him to the field of honor. He devoted a large part of the night to writing to his friends that he is going to fight a duel.

To avoid a distressing scene, he has decided not to take a farewell of his wife and daughter, but to his surprise they are fully as calm as he. It strikes him that they are singularly lacking in heart. They even remind him that he must be prompt. Armand suddenly bursts into the garden.

Arm. Stop, Monsieur Perrichon! The duel will not take place.

All. What!

Arm. It's very simple. I've had Major Mathieu locked up.

All. Locked up!

Arm. Yes, it has been decided upon for a month by the Major and myself, and I couldn't find a better occasion to oblige him. [*To* PERRICHON.] And you, too.

Mme. P. Oh, what gratitude . . .

Hen. You are our deliverer!

Perrichon can scarcely conceal his vexation. Madame Perrichon gets the others out of the way to give Armand a chance to follow up his advantage. The young man is full of confidence.

Arm. I am happier than I can say to have been able to stop this disagreeable affair.

Per. [*aside*]. Always his little air of protection! [*Aloud.*] As for me, sir, I regret that you have deprived me of the opportunity of giving a lesson to this professor of grammar.

Arm. Why, but you forget that your adversary . . .

Per. Is an ex-major of the Second Zouaves. Well, what of it? I esteem the army, but I am one of those who can face it. [*He takes a few strides proudly.*]

John announces Major Mathieu.

Per. What?

Arm. He?

Per. You told me he was in prison!

Major [*coming forward*]. I was, indeed, but I have got out. Ah, Monsieur Armand, I have just transmitted to you the amount which I owed.

Arm. Very well, Major. I trust that you do not bear me any grudge. You seemed so anxious to be locked up.

Major. Oh, that's all right, but on days when I am going to fight . . . [*To* PERRICHON.] I regret exceedingly having made you wait. I am at your service. Let us start.

Per. Let us start!

Major [*looking at his watch*]. It is noon.

Per. [*aside*]. Noon already!

Major. We shall be there by two o'clock.

Per. [*aside*]. Two o'clock! They will have gone.

Arm. What is it?

Per. I have always thought that there was a certain nobility in acknowledging when one is in the wrong.

This remark produces considerable surprise. Perrichon asks Armand and John to leave him with the Major, but the Major prefers that Perrichon shall say anything he has to say before witnesses.

Per. Major, you are a brave officer . . . and I . . . I love officers. I admit that I did you an injustice . . . and I beg you to believe that I . . . [*Aside.*] Heavens, before my servant! [*Aloud.*] I beg you to believe that I had no intention . . . [*He makes a sign to* JOHN *to go, but* JOHN *does not appear to understand. Aside.*] It's all the same to me. I'll fire him to-night.

[*Aloud.*] Nor was it my thought . . . to offend a man whom I esteem and honor.

Major. Sir, you wrote in a large hand in the book at Montanvert: "The Major is a . . ."

Per. I retract the word! It is retracted!

Major. It is retracted . . . here . . . but there! It is spread all over the middle of a page where every traveller can read it.

Per. Ha! Bother it, yes, unless I should go back myself to erase it.

Major. I should not have dared to ask it, but as you offer . . .

Per. I?

Major. I accept.

Per. Allow me . . .

Major. Oh, I don't ask you to go to-day, no. But to-morrow. I respect your conciliatory feelings.

Per. I don't like to spill blood.

The Major declares himself completely satisfied and goes out.

John [*sadly*]. Well, sir, so your duel is off.

Per. [*bursting out*]. I discharge you! Go pack your belongings, animal!

John [*stupefied*]. Well, what have I done?

[*He goes out.*

Per. There's nothing to be said, I've backed down! I, whose portrait will be seen at the Musée! . . . But whose fault is it? This Armand's! Ha! Why doesn't he get out? Perhaps he has another service to do me. Pretty things, these services!

Arm. [*coming forward*]. Yesterday upon leaving you I went to my friend in the customs department. I spoke to him of that matter.

Per. [*dryly*]. You are too good.

Arm. It's all fixed. There will be no prosecution.

Per. Ah!

Arm. But you must write the inspector an apology.

Per. That's it! Apologies! More apologies! What are you meddling with this for?

Arm. But . . .

Per. Aren't you going to drop your habit of interfering at every moment of my life?

Arm. What?

Per. Yes, you're mixed up in everything! Who asked you to have the Major arrested? If it hadn't been for you we should have been there at noon!

Arm. But nothing prevented your being there at two o'clock.

Per. That's not the same thing.

Arm. Why not?

Per. You want to know why? Because . . . no, you shan't know why! [*Angrily.*] Enough of your services, sir! Enough of your services! Henceforth, if I fall into a hole I beg you to let me stay there. I'd much rather give a hundred francs to the guide. That's what it costs, a hundred francs. There's nothing to be so proud about! I beg you also not to change the hours of my duels, and to let me go to prison if I take a fancy to.

Arm. But, Monsieur Perrichon . . .

Per. I don't like people who intrude. It's indiscreet. You are a trespasser!

Arm. But let me . . .

Per. No, sir! I won't be dominated! Enough of your services! Enough of your services! [*He goes off to the summerhouse.*]

Henrietta comes in at the back of the garden, and seeing Armand runs forward to him. She is quite overcome to hear that her father has expressed dislike for him, and assures him that she does not like Daniel. She will not let him thank her, but says he must thank mamma, who is on his side, and leaves in some embarrassment.

Daniel returns. He is now confident of success, and in the goodness of his heart points out to Armand some of the mistakes of his campaign in order that he may profit by his experience another time.

Dan. You're too fond of rendering services. It's an unfortunate passion.

Arm. [*laughing*]. How is that?

Dan. Believe me. I have lived longer than you, and in a more sophisticated world. Before obliging a man assure yourself first that he is not an imbecile.

Arm. Why?

Dan. Because an imbecile is incapable of enduring for

very long the crushing burden called gratitude. There are even people of sense who are too delicately organized.

Arm. Develop your paradox.

Dan. If you wish an example: Perrichon.

Perrichon looks out of the door of the summerhouse.

Dan. You will excuse me for not classifying him as a superman. Well, you quietly took a good grip on Perrichon.

Arm. I greatly fear so.

Dan. Nevertheless, you saved his life. You imagine perhaps that this thought reminds him of a great act of devotion. No, it reminds him of three things: first, that he can't ride a horse; secondly, that it was a mistake to wear spurs contrary to his wife's advice; thirdly, that he was thrown in public.

Arm. True, but . . .

Dan. And as if you must have a cluster of these fine fireworks, you demonstrate to him, as two and two make four, that you take no account of his courage, by preventing a duel . . . that wouldn't have taken place. I had taken precautions. I do services sometimes, too.

Arm. Well, you see.

Dan. Yes, but I hide them. I mask them. When I investigate the wretchedness of my fellowman it is in my stocking feet and without a light, as if in a powder mill. From which, my conclusion . . .

Arm. That one mustn't oblige any one?

Dan. No. But it is essential to work in the dark and to select the victim. Wherefore, I sum up that the aforesaid Perrichon detests you. Your presence humiliates him. He is under obligations to you, is your inferior. You crush the man.

Arm. But that is ingratitude!

Dan. Ingratitude is a variety of pride. It is independence of heart, as an amiable philosopher has said. Now Monsieur Perrichon is the most independent carriage maker in France. I scented that at once. Also, I took a course directly opposite to yours.

Arm. What?

Dan. I let myself slide into a little crevasse on purpose, not a dangerous one. Don't you see, if you give a carriage maker the chance of saving his fellowman without danger

to himself it is a master stroke. From that day I was his joy, his triumph, his feat of arms. I no sooner appeared than his face beamed, his bosom swelled, and he sprouted peacock plumes under his coat. I held him as fast as vanity can hold a man. When it grew cool, I revived it again. I printed it in the paper at three francs a line.

Arm. Oh, so it was you?

Dan. Bah! To-morrow I'm going to have him painted in oils, in tête-à-tête with Mont Blanc! I stipulated for a very little Mont Blanc and an immense Perrichon! Lastly, my friend, remember this, and above all keep my secret: men do not become attached to you for the services which you do them, but for those which they do you.

Perrichon enters the garden with his wife and daughter. He is very grave. He says he is glad to find both the young men there, for he is going to tell them his decision. He turns to Daniel with a smile.

Per. Daniel, my friend, I have already done much for you. I wish to do still more. I wish to award to you . . .

Dan. [*gratefully*]. Ah, Monsieur!

Per. [*coldly*]. A piece of advice. [*Lower.*] Don't speak so loud when you are near a door.

Dan. [*astonished*]. Ah! Ha!

Per. Yes . . . I thank you for the lesson. [*Aloud.*] Armand, you have not seen so much of life as your friend, but you please me more. I give you my daughter.

Arm. Ah, Monsieur!

Per. And note that I do not seek to acquit myself toward you. I desire to remain your debtor. [*Looking at* DANIEL.] For it is only imbeciles who cannot support the crushing burden known as gratitude.

[*He moves away and* HENRIETTA *goes to* ARMAND. DANIEL *follows* PERRICHON.]

Dan. So you listen at doors?

Per. Well, well, a father must seek to enlighten himself. Come, now, truly, did you throw yourself down there on purpose?

Dan. Where is that?

Per. In the hole?

Dan. Yes . . . but I shan't tell anybody.

Per. I beg of you!

They shake hands.

A SCRAP OF PAPER

By Victorien Sardou

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Gymnase on May 15, 1860.

Argument: Prosper Couramont tries to make Baroness de la Glacière help him find a wife by getting possession of a love letter that she wrote him before her marriage. Suzanne de Russeville, cousin of the Baroness, endeavors to help her recover the note from Prosper, but it is lost and there is danger that it will be found by the Baron. Does Prosper achieve his object, and is the threatened mischief avoided?

A period of six weeks' grace in which to find a wife strikes Prosper Couramont as a somewhat brief allowance upon his return to France after three years spent in Eastern travel. Yet comply with this requirement he must in order to provide the comforts of a well-regulated home for the benefit of a millionaire uncle living at Chinon, who otherwise will marry his maid-of-all-work and cut off Prosper without a sou.

A mode of procedure is suggested to Prosper by seeing a dashing young beauty riding horseback in the village. He learns that she is Mlle. Mathilde de Merical, the sister of Louise, with whom he was in love before her marriage to the Baron de la Glacière. He loses little time in calling upon his old sweetheart to ask for Mathilde's hand. Louise informs him, however, that when she was carried off to Paris to be married to the Baron she wrote to him to come and elope with her. He did not respond, and now she will not tolerate him as her sister's husband.

They had been in the habit of concealing billets doux designed for each other in a statuette in her mother's drawing-room, but Prosper was wounded in a duel at the

critical moment and could not go to get her desperate appeal. The first news he heard upon recovering was that she had married, and he has not yet ceased to reproach her for fickleness. As the house has been closed ever since, it is evident that the missive is still in its hiding-place. Louise, horrified at the possibility that her husband might find it, as he is jealous beyond belief, is about to go to the statuette when she hears her husband coming.

The Baron de la Glacière enters, accompanied by M. Brisemouche, the latter's sister, Zenobie, and Anatole, a young man who lives with them. Glacière notes with suspicion that his wife is agitated, and his distrust is augmented by a disagreement between her and M. Couramont. She announces that the guest asked for the hand of her sister, but has now withdrawn the request. Prosper declares that he has not withdrawn it by any means.

The situation is painfully interesting to Anatole, who is in love with Mathilde and has been hampered in paying his addresses by the opposition of his guardians. M. Brisemouche and his sister are determined that Anatole shall devote his attention to his studies. Mathilde brings in her cousin, Mlle. Suzanne de Russeville, whom she introduces to the company. Profiting by this diversion, Prosper is about to lift the statuette when his hostess, seeing what he is about, calls him abruptly and presents him to Suzanne.

Prosper. I have long been desirous of being introduced to you, mademoiselle.

Suzanne. You are fond of *curiosities*, I believe?

Brisemouche. He has collected them from all parts of the world. He is a mighty traveller——

Suz. A man's happy privilege! How is a poor woman to scamper over the world in steel hoops and crinoline petticoats? What is the greatest curiosity you have seen in the world?

Prosp. The greatest curiosity? Woman, of course!

Suz. It seems you have studied the animal.

Prosp. Yes, as Brisemouche does insects and reptiles.

Suz. I hope you have not found any venomous specimens.

Prosp. Sometimes—and they are generally the fairest to the eye. [*Turns to look at the* BARONESS, *and sees her about*

to take down the Flora—aside.] She's at it again! [*Aloud.*] I was just making that identical remark to Madame de la Glacière—wasn't I? [*By directly addressing the* BARONESS *he forces her to drop the Flora, which she has just lifted, and come down—he offers her a chair, and thus obliges her to sit.*] I was comparing woman to a bird with a sharp beak, long claws, and varied plumage, which it is always striving to show off to the best advantage, and moults at every caprice of fashion.

Suz. Indeed! And would you speak in that tone of your mother, or your sister, or your wife?

Prosp. I haven't got one.

Suz. Then, that's the reason you are so deficient in your knowledge of natural history.

Prosp. But, my dear Madame, the exception only proved the rule.

Suz. But, my dear sir, the rule is wholly made up of exceptions.

Prosp. Well, I confess I believed in exceptions until——

Suz. Until what?

Prosp. Until two or three pleasant attempts were made to poison me. Since then, even in our civilized country, where poisons take the shape of perfidy and breach of faith, I have sworn never to be without an antidote.

Brise. Bless my soul, an antidote! Of what nature?

Prosp. Oh, the merest trifle, sometimes, is enough—a mere scrap of paper, perhaps—a line of scribbling.

Suz. [*aside*]. He means some letter. Hum! hum! What is all this?

Brise. Fie, fie! you wouldn't use such a weapon against a woman.

Prosp. I would—as a shield, not a sword. Such a system is permissible by the moral code of every nation.

Brise. There! we shall have him citing his darling Chinese now.

Prosp. Why not? They are our superiors in many things—their porcelain, for instance. Now compare with Chinese works of art this little Sevres ornament for instance. [*To the* BARONESS.] It is a statuette of Flora, I perceive. [*Takes down the Flora.*]

Louise [*alarmed*]. Stop, sir!

Prosp. Don't be alarmed, Madame! I know all its value.

Louise [*trying to stop him*]. Give it to me—it's covered with dust.

Prosp. [*coming down with it*]. Don't give yourself the trouble. [*Aside.*] I feel the letter.

Louise [*trying to dust with her handkerchief*]. Allow me, with my handkerchief——

Prosp. No, no! I'll blow on it—that will do. [*Turns away as if to blow the dust off the statuette.*]

Suz. [*seizing the hand of* BARONESS *to stop her—apart*]. Your husband's eyes are upon you.

Louise. Oh! did you but know! [*The letter falls.*] Ah! [PROSPER *puts his foot hastily on the letter.*]

Suz. [*aside.*] A letter! I was sure of it!

Prosp. [*giving the Flora to the* BARONESS]. It is evident you set great store by this little ornament, Madame.

Louise [*low to him*]. What you are doing is shameful, sir!

[*The bell rings without for luncheon.*]

Enter MATHILDE.

Math. Luncheon is ready.

Brise. [*getting up*]. I'm not sorry to hear it.

Anat. [*rising hastily and getting away from* ZENOBIE]. No, nor I.

Zeno. [*apart to* ANATOLE]. I forbid you to sit by the side of that Mademoiselle Mathilde.

Anat. But I——

Zeno. I forbid you, I say.

Math. [*seizing hold of* ANATOLE]. You'll give me your arm, Monsieur Anatole?

Zeno. I forbid you. [*Turning, she finds herself opposite to the* BARON, *who offers his arm formally; she is obliged to accept—the* BARONESS, *unwillingly, takes the arm of* BRISEMOUCHE, *and keeps looking back at* PROSPER—*the party gradually prepare to go out the door.*]

Suz. [*to* PROSPER, *who never stirs, and stands with his foot on the letter*]. My dear sir, don't you mean to offer me your arm?

Prosp. I beg your pardon, but I've let fall my handkerchief. [*Lets fall his handkerchief, and picks up the letter with it.*]

Suz. [*low to him*]. Come, come! Give it up like a gentleman.

Prosp. [*low to her*]. Give up what?

Suz. The letter!

Prosp. My antidote? No, I thank you.

Suz. I'll make you give it up.

Prosp. I'll bet you anything you like you won't.

Suz. I'll bet you anything you like I will.

Baron [*turning back*]. Are you coming, you two?

Prosp. [*aloud*]. Deign to accept my arm, Madame.

Suz. So you are a collector of curiosities? I think I shall be able to show you a few curious matters which may astonish you, great traveller as you are!

Prosp. [*laughing*]. In instruments of warfare?

Suz. In instruments of warfare. Have you ever met with any Amazons in your travels? They say it is a fabulous race—not quite, my dear sir; not quite, I can assure you—I'm an Amazon! Only, nowadays people call us old maids, blue stockings, or strong-minded women!

[*They go up toward L. door, laughing.*

Prosper is the guest of his old friend, Brisemouche. While sitting in a study that he has decorated with a great quantity of Oriental curiosities, considering where he shall hide the letter, there is a knock at the door. Anatole comes in pale with emotion, for he is determined to fight a duel with Prosper for pretending to the hand of Mathilde. In the kindness of his heart Prosper consents to satisfy the youth, but stipulates that the affair shall be conducted in the Japanese fashion.

Prosp. [*fetching two Malay daggers, and presenting them politely*]. Here are the tools for the job. Take your choice!

Anat. One of these?

Prosp. Of course. [ANATOLE *takes one.*] You have taken the biggest—but never mind. And now—[*sits down*]—you are the challenging party, have the kindness to begin.

Anat. [*turning in an attitude of defence, and surprised at seeing* PROSPER *quietly seated*]. Begin! How?

Prosp. [*coolly*]. By ripping yourself up.

Anat. Rip myself up?

Prosp. Yes, it's the Japanese manner of proceeding.

They call it "the happy despatch." The challenger rips himself up first, and then the challenged is bound in honor to follow his example. Proceed—I'll follow you immediately!

The interview is interrupted by the arrival of Mme. de la Glacière with Mathilde and Suzanne, who have come to see the curios. After the ladies have gone Suzanne comes back again and demands the letter. Prosper maintains that it is his property. She will not concede the point, but asks what use he wishes to make of it.

Prosp. My answer to that question has been already categorically given. Let the strictest neutrality be observed; and the moment I give up all hopes of Mathilde, I'll bid an eternal adieu to Madame de la Glacière, and burn the letter before her eyes.

Suz. You will do that?

Prosp. On my honor! And I verily believe I should have done so at once on returning home—of course, without admitting the fact—had you not defied me to mortal combat.

Suz. Well, then, I withdraw my challenge; and you can burn it now. [*Rising, laughing.*] Look, here is a capital fire—I won't say a word to Louise—and you will lose nothing by your good action.

Prosp. [*rising, laughing*]. I beg your pardon—I should lose the intense satisfaction of seeing you hunt for the letter in vain.

Suz. Is that your ultimatum?

Prosp. My ultimatissimum. Search, search! I shan't prevent you. The letter is here—somewhere!

Suz. In this very room?

Prosp. Or else in the other! First catch your hare, and then you may cook him, yourself, at any fire you please.

Suz. No, no, I shall not be satisfied till I have made you burn it with your own hands.

Prosp. Indeed! Then, I give you my word of honor, if you contrive to do that I will pack myself off this very evening to look for a wife in the Cannibal Islands, Jericho, or anywhere you please.

Suz. Your word of honor?

Prosp. My word of honor!

Suz. Beware! I am obstinate.

Prosp. So am I.

Suz. I am going to sit down to a regular siege—I shall bore you until you say yourself, "I had better burn the letter and get rid of that nuisance of a woman!"

Prosp. Never was criminal threatened with so alluring a punishment! I'm enraptured to think of the many pleasant hours we are about to pass in a long delicious *tête-à-tête*—I am sorry to be obliged to leave you a short time—I have an indispensable visit to pay to a tiresome old uncle, but pray consider yourself perfectly at home.

Suzanne finds it disconcerting to be left alone in a man's apartments, but Louise soon comes to join her and begins a feverish search of the room. Louise reproaches Suzanne for indifference, but Suzanne thinks the letter is not in any very secret place. She turns over the heaps of letters in a basket on the table. One of them addressed to Prosper at Honolulu attracts her attention. It contains a slip of pink paper with a few words in Louise's handwriting, which Suzanne starts to read:

"My dear love, I leave to-night for Paris——"

Louise seizes the note. It is the one. At this moment there is a knock at the door and Louise hears her husband's voice. She flies in terror to the bedroom, in spite of Suzanne's protests, and locks herself in. Suzanne unlocks the outer door and admits the baron.

Baron [*surprised*]. You!

Suz. [*calm and smiling*]. Yes—I! What an uproar you have been making!

Baron. Here!

Suz. In this museum. I'm looking at all the curiosities.

Baron [*looking round him*]. Alone?

Suz. You see—— [*Sits at table and examines a drawer full of shells.*] What a wonderful collection of shells to be sure—only look?

Baron [*putting down his gun*]. But I heard talking.

Suz. I was trying to pronounce these dreadful words aloud. Why *will* scientific men give such preposterous names to things? Oh, look, isn't that pretty?

Baron. You were *not* alone—Louise was here.

Suz. What should she be doing here?

Baron. Something she was ashamed of apparently, since she made her escape.

Suz. [*laughing, still looking at the shells*]. Ha, ha, ha! does this fit often seize you, cousin?

Baron. She was here, I say!

Suz. And if she was, why shouldn't she be here still? Do you think she has hidden herself under the table?

Baron [*roughly, looking her full in the face*]. Then why didn't you open the door immediately?

Suz. [*not at all disconcerted*]. Because I thought the knocking was at the other door—and I opened that first.

Baron. In order that Louise might get away. That's the way she went then? [*Goes up to door.*]

Suz. What a tiresome old bear you are! If Louise went that way, go and look after her; and leave me to examine the shells.

Baron [*coming down*]. My wife was strangely agitated this morning after her conversation with Monsieur What's-his-name—whom she knew before her marriage—more still, during that little affair about the statuette—what did that mean?

Suz. [*coming down—looking at shells*]. Perhaps she was afraid he would drop it.

Baron [*getting more and more angry*]. The man made an offer of marriage for Mathilde without ever having seen her—a mere pretext, it is very clear, to get into the house and see my wife—a got-up plan to divert my suspicions! [*Seizing hold of* SUZANNE.] Look me in the face and tell me it was not so, if you can.

Suz. It's as clear as noonday—only let go my hand, please, for you hurt me; and a pretty mess you have made of the poor shells. [*Opens her hand—shows the shells in powder.*] You really don't know how to behave yourself.

Baron. Listen: I left Brisemouche out shooting, to return home. I inquired for my wife—she was gone out; but I had her spaniel, Fidèle, with me; and he has tracked her to this house—to the foot of that stair; I tell you my wife is here! Where is she, I say? Where is she?

Suz. What do you ask me for? Since you've taken to hunting your wife, as they hunt negroes, whistle for Fidèle, my dear sir—whistle for Fidèle.

Baron. Suzanne, you trifle with my feelings!

Suz. Trifle with your feelings! No—I wish to spare them. If I laugh at you, it is to show how senseless is

your conduct. Come—come—calm yourself, and try to be a little reasonable.

Baron. You are right—you are right to jeer me—my jealousy blinds me—it drives me mad! It makes me utterly miserable! [*Throws himself into a chair.*]

Suz. Look up, my poor friend! Now, how *can* you ruin all your happiness thus when you have a charming wife who thinks of nobody but you—lives for nobody but you?

Baron. I know it, Suzanne—I know it—and I am calm now—quite calm—but should anything again ever cause me to suspect——[*Seeing* LOUISE'S *shawl, and darting on it.*] My wife's shawl! Ah! you see she has been here! [*Rises.*]

Suz. Well—what of the shawl?

Baron. Who put it there?

Suz. I did—I took up the first that came to hand.

Baron. I don't believe you. My wife's shawl is here—then she's not gone—she's still concealed here—and I swear that if I find her—— [*Goes to take his gun.*]

Suz. Baron! I beg of you——

Baron [*searching, in spite of her*]. Leave me!

Suz. [*trying to stop him*]. Hear me! Hear me!

Baron [*finding the door*]. Ah! there's a door here! [SUZANNE *springs between him and the door.*] She is concealed in that man's room. Let me go—by heaven, I'll have his life! [*Menacing with his gun.*]

Suz. For my sake——

Baron. For your sake?

Suz. [*with feverish haste, as if regardless of what she is saying*]. Yes—for mine! you drive me to this confession by your violence. What! were you so blind? Did not my embarrassment—my agitation—at once reveal the truth? I didn't open the door at once, 'tis true, because I was afraid of being found here. Your dog evidently recognized your wife's shawl which I wore. Don't you see? Louise refused her sister's hand to Prosper because she knew I loved him years ago—don't you see? Prosper imagined I had deceived him, and so wanted to marry another in order to revenge himself on me—don't you see? When Louise spoke low to him, it was to justify me and prevent this detested marriage, which I was resolved never should take place—don't you see? don't you see?

Baron Yes, yes, I remember now. He spoke this

morning of some heartless treachery on the part of a woman.

Suz. He meant me—I was the heartless treachery [*sighing*]. But it was all a mistake—a misunderstanding.

Baron. Why not tell me this at once?

Suz. Can you ask the question? What woman would willingly confess the weakness of her heart? And then you were so violent, and made such an awful noise—you don't know what a noise you *do* make. And I was so frightened, and—so out it came—I don't know how—and—don't you see? don't you see? [*Aside.*] I don't know what on earth I am talking about.

Baron. Be calm, my dear Suzanne—no one shall ever learn this secret from me. But I'll not allow this man to trifle with your feelings in this manner—I'll see him at once.

Suz. See him?—what for?

Baron. What for? Why, to tell him I know the state of affairs between you, make him withdraw his pretensions to the hand of Mathilde, and—and——

Suz. And what?

Baron. What? Why marry you to be sure!

Suz. [*aside*]. Good heavens! I didn't take that into my reckoning.

Baron. Yes, yes; I'll see the fellow—speak out my mind at once.

Suz. What are you thinking of, my dear friend? Let me see him first—endeavor to lure him back myself. You would not deprive a woman of her dearest privilege—would you, cousin?

Baron. As you will. [*Going on with volubility, spite of the efforts of* SUZANNE *to speak.*] Marry you he shall—dead or alive! I won't have him play fast and loose with cousin Suzanne—that I won't. I owe him a grudge for making me suspect Louise—my own dear good Louise. [*Bursts out laughing.*] Good heavens! what a fool man makes of himself sometimes! But he shall pay for it—he shall marry you as a punishment—no, I don't mean that—but marry you he shall! [*Taking up his gun.*] Now, then, to bring down my man! amicably—I mean amicably! [*Patting his gun.*] Old trusty, here, is for the partridges—so ho, Fidèle! and off we go!

Suz. [*aside*]. Now the popular opinion is that man can't talk.

Baron [*turning at door*]. Not a word to Louise!

Suz. She shall not know more about the affair than she knows at this moment—I give you my word.

Baron. I would not have her know for the world.

[*He goes out.*

Suzanne is the mistress of a large fortune and has remained unmarried from choice. She is a very independent young woman and has no idea of getting married on account of this muddle if there is any way to avoid it. Louise is engrossed with her own troubles and urges Suzanne to burn the letter and make Prosper go away at once. She goes home to be there before her husband.

It is obviously a simple matter to burn the letter, but to make Prosper go away is a very different thing. Suzanne recalls, however, that Prosper promised that he would go to look for a wife in the Polynesian Islands if she could make him burn the letter. She determines to place it in a suggestive manner between the bars of the fender, twisted up like a lamplighter. Having done so she throws the matches in the fire. Then she hears a step outside, quickly settles herself in an easy chair, and pretends to be asleep. Prosper enters.

Prosp. Asleep! Overcome with fatigue and utterly discouraged. [*Looking around him.*] She has been turning everything topsy-turvey. [*Looks into room, and laughs.*] Yes, and there, too! Now for the letter! Can she have found it? [SUZANNE *follows him with the corners of her eyes, while he opens the tobacco jar and sees the envelope.*] No, all safe—— Come, woman's cunning has been baffled for once. [*Sits down at table and looks at* SUZANNE.] I am sorry for her—[*looking more closely*]—she is really a very nice woman—pretty hand—good eyes, too—I really must have another look at her eyes. [*Getting up and bending over her.*]

Suz. [*opening her eyes wide, and looking at him*]. What did you say?

Prosp. [*staggering back*]. Knocked clean over!

Suz. [*pretending to awake*]. Oh! I beg your pardon, I believe I must have dropped asleep.

Prosp. Pray consider yourself at home.

Suz. [*rising*]. What o'clock is it?

Prosp. [*going to the clock on the mantelpiece*]. Past six.

Suz. So late! Well, I can't help it—I won't give up my purpose; and here I shall remain at my post till that purpose is accomplished.

Prosp. Allow me to admire your obstinacy. It is the most heroic piece of chivalry I have ever seen.

Suz. Obstinacy! You are not gallant.

Prosp. Well, let us say firmness.

Suz. Yes: firmness in a woman—obstinacy in a man.

Prosp. Now, take care, you are pitting yourself against a man who has fought with Red Indians, and won his tomahawk on the field. I have been dubbed a great chief myself, and it would be no mean glory to carry off my scalp. [*It gets gradually dusk.*]

Suz. But, great chief, in spite of the intense satisfaction I should naturally have in scalping you, I have better motives than the desire of obtaining such questionable glory. But please light your lamp—it is getting quite dark.

Prosp. Immediately. [*Takes off the globe of the lamp on the table and looks at it.*] There! that fool of a servant has put no wick in the lamp. [*He rings.*]

Suz. Then light a candle—it will be much handier.

Prosp. You are right. [*Hunting about for matches.*] Of course, there may exist women who—now there's not a match to be found anywhere.

Suz. Then take a piece of paper, my dear sir.

Prosp. [*seeing the piece of paper on the hearth*]. Ah! this will do. [*Picks up paper.*] There may exist women, certainly, who are so far traitors to their nature as to—— [*He lights the paper.*]

Enter FRANÇOIS, *door, with a lighted lamp.*

Prosper blows out the paper and retains it in his hand.

Suz. [*aside*]. Was ever anything so provoking! Another minute, and he would have done it. [FRANÇOIS *has put the lamp on the table, and gone out.*]

Prosp. As I said, there may be women who—in short—upon my word, I don't know, now, what I was going to say.

Suz. You were going to say, probably, that there may

be women who would do and sacrifice much for the peace of mind of a friend.

Prosp. [*seated at table, holding the paper*]. A friend! a friend! Have women female friends? [*Aside.*] She looks better still by lamplight.

Suz. You don't believe in friendship.

Prosp. In that respect I have not a much better opinion of our own sex than of yours. [*Aside.*] I can't help being fascinated by her more and more.

Suz. [*taking the envelope and false letter from the jar mechanically and playing with it while* PROSPER *shows his agitation*]. Come, that's something. You have generally so marvellous an opinion of your own superiority.

Prosp. [*laughing at seeing the letter in her hand and shaking the paper he holds*]. We certainly sometimes fancy we see more clearly than your sex. [*Laughing—aside.*] She little knows she's got the letter. [*Aloud.*] Well, if I be an egotist, I have never found out after a life's experience what I gained by doing good to others.

Suz. [*throwing back the envelope into the jar*]. Gained!—the pleasure of doing it. Does that count for nothing? Ah! if you knew how bright the world would look to you under the consciousness of having done good—if you knew with how light a heart you would sleep at night—with how cheery a spirit you would raise your head from your pillow in the morning, you would never ask again what you would gain.

Prosp. [*surprised and pleased*]. Perhaps—I don't know.

Suz. Exactly. You *don't* know.

Prosp. [*aside.*] What a smile the woman has! and what a heart! [*Lets fall the letter on the carpet.*]

Suz. [*aside*]. Suppose I put out the lamp; he must light it again. [*She begins turning the lamp up and down.*]

Prosp. [*with enthusiasm*]. Ah, my dear Madam, if it were true——Does the lamp smoke?

Suz. It does a little. [*Puts it out.*] There—I've put it out.

Prosp. [*aside.*] So much the better. [*Aloud.*] Ah, if it were true that your heart alone prompted you to give me battle, my admiration for your courage would give place to a far warmer feeling. I don't exactly know why, but it is a fact, of all the women I have ever seen you are the only woman who is a real woman.

Suz. A very pretty declaration, upon my word—only a little obscure. Perhaps it would be clearer if you lighted your lamp.

Prosp. [*approaching her*]. Ah, the fitful flicker of the cozy fire on the hearth is better suited to what I would say.

Suz. Light the lamp, sir, or you'll force me to go at once.

Prosp. But I've got no matches.

Suz. Will you light the lamp, sir?

Prosp. I declare to you——

Suz. I'll hear no declaration till you light the lamp.

Prosp. I dare say you think I *am* mad! I am not. Perhaps it was the most sensible thing I could do to fall in love with the god-daughter this morning and the godmother this evening.

Suz. Well, then, since you drive me away, sir. [*Getting up.*]

Prosp. Don't go—don't go—don't leave your purpose unaccomplished. You have made me believe in the existence of a woman's heart that can beat with kindliness and purity. Let me prove myself worthy of that heart. See! here is the letter! [*Takes envelope from jar.*] I yield—I burn it before your own eyes. [*Throws the envelope into the fire.*]

Suz. [*aside*]. Now I could positively hug the man for that!

Prosp. [*taking up the burning envelope with the tongs*]. Look, Madam, it burns—it burns.

Suz. I haven't the heart to send him away now. I must confess all.

Prosp. Shall I lay down the ashes at your feet?

Suz. [*laughing*]. Are you quite sure you have burned the right thing?

Prosp. Can you doubt?

Suz. Your good faith?—oh, no! But pick up that little scrap of paper you had in your hand just now.

Prosp. [*hunting on the carpet*]. That little scrap of paper! What do you mean?

Suz. [*pointing it out, laughing*]. There it is!

Prosp. [*picking it up with surprise*]. Well, and what then?

Suz. [*listening*]. Hush! what's that I hear?

Prosp. [*going to window*]. The barking of dogs! [*Looks*

out.] Brisemouche and the Baron are coming toward the house.

Suz. And they may come upstairs! Give me that scrap of paper, quick!

Prosp. This darkness is rather awkward—I understand. I'll light the candle at once. [*He lights the paper.*]

Baron [*without, beneath the window*]. Here, Fidèle!

Suz. [*aside*]. It was fated that *he* should burn the paper after all! [PROSPER *lights the candle with the burning paper, and throws it out of the window.*] Oh, what have you done?

Baron [*as before*]. Holloa! Do you mean to set the house on fire?

Prosp. [*at window looking out*]. Some one is picking it up!

Suz. The Baron! Oh, we're lost!

Prosp. What do you mean?

Suz. That was the very letter!

Prosp. [*bewildered*]. That scrap of paper—*the* letter?

Suz. The very letter! Run!—quick!—get it back! Why don't you run?

Prosp. [*losing his head, and running to the window*]. I am running!

Suz. Not by the window, man—by the door!

Prosp. [*running to the door*]. Yes, to be sure!

Suz. Not that way!

Prosp. No, no, of course not! [*Runs to door, throwing down all the furniture in his way.*]

Suz. You'll find me at the château in the conservatory!

Prosp. I'll have it, dead or alive! [*Runs out door.*

Suz. That comes of being too clever by half!

[*Exit, rapidly, door.*

The Baron takes Brisemouche home to dinner with him. Brisemouche failed to shoot any partridges, but he is delighted at having found a rare beetle. He was carrying it in his hand when a piece of burning paper fell from Prosper's window, and he picked up the paper to wrap the beetle with. He comes into the conservatory of the château with the twisted paper containing the beetle stuck in the muzzle of his gun, and leaves the gun standing in a corner.

Suzanne and Prosper, having failed to find the piece of

paper in Brisemouche's garden, follow the sportsmen to the château and come into the conservatory. Suzanne is greatly distressed at the possibility of the Baron having found the scrap of paper and makes Prosper go back to continue the search. Then she learns from a servant that Brisemouche picked up the paper, and goes to call Prosper back.

Anatole has got into disgrace by neglecting his studies and was sent off to take the five o'clock train back to school, but he escaped from the carriage and made his way to the château. He now comes into the conservatory with great circumspection in the hope of obtaining a clandestine interview with his fair one. He looks about for paper on which to write a note to her, but as there is no stationery at hand he takes the twist from the gun, discards the beetle as a thing of little value, and having torn off the burnt part of the paper, writes a note on the blank side and entrusts it to a new maid to deliver.

Suzanne returns to the conservatory with Brisemouche, and Anatole conceals himself discreetly among the shrubs. Brisemouche is telling Suzanne that he stuck the paper in the muzzle of his gun. Alas, it is gone, and the rare specimen with it. She insists that he must find the paper at least, but then as imperatively insists upon his stopping again when the Baron enters the room.

They are summoned to dinner. Prosper, unsuccessful and famished, comes back a minute later. He sees a bit of pink paper on the floor and utters a loud cry of joy, but it is only the burnt part torn off by Anatole. He has about decided that the Baron himself must have found the note when the Baron comes in to see who is there.

Baron. I thought I heard a voice. [*Perceiving him.*] Ah—it's you!

Prosp. I beg your pardon—I'm afraid I'm rather late. [*Going to dining-room.*]

Baron [*stopping him*]. Two words, if you please.

Prosp. [*aside, coming back*]. I shall have to fight on an empty stomach.

Baron. Do you still entertain the same views you did this morning?

Prosp. [*aside*]. They will have done dinner soon.

Baron. Do you still entertain the same views——

Prosp. Yes—no—that is—[*aside*]—I had forgotten all about that! [*Aloud.*] Well, in principle, yes—in practice, no; certainly not—in fact, Madame de la Glacière displayed so much opposition to my projects——

Baron. She had her reasons, probably.

Prosp. I don't know what reasons.

Baron [*quietly*]. Her unwillingness probably to see you sacrifice an old attachment to a new fancy.

Prosp. [*after looking at him steadily*]. Indeed! [*Aside.*] Nothing like making the plunge at once. [*With a change of manner.*] I see, sir, that you know all.

Baron. All.

Prosp. Then perhaps you'll permit the conversation to drop until after dinner. [*Attempts again to enter dining-room—stopped by the* BARON.]

Baron. I beg pardon, sir—the affair is too serious to admit of any delay.

Prosp. Serious—serious! After all, there's nothing so very serious in the matter. I admit that I entertained a very strong regard for the lady—that there was a sort of understanding between us, and that we even had a trifling correspondence; but that was all—and the lady has no longer the slightest regard for me.

Baron. Her affection is undiminished.

Prosp. I beg your pardon—I beg your pardon—I give you my word of honor that——

Baron. She has confessed it to me herself.

Prosp. Confessed *it!*—confessed what?

Baron. Her attachment to you.

Prosp. She confessed that—to you?

Baron. To me.

Prosp. [*aside*]. I'm thunderstruck!

Baron. She has told me all, sir. Your desertion of her upon the most unfounded suspicion—your long absence in consequence—and, in spite of your unkindness, the affection she still bears you——

Prosp. She told you *that!*

Baron. She told me that.

Prosp. [*aside*]. Well, I must say she might have chosen another confidant. [*Aloud.*] I understand you, sir; and you have sought me to demand a reparation at the sword's point.

Baron. Far from it—to try and effect a reconciliation between you.

Prosp. [*stupefied*]. What!

Baron. And to take you by the hand. [*Stretches out his hand.*]

Prosp. You are too good. [*Aside.*] Too good, a vast deal!

Baron. Her happiness is in your hands.

Prosp. Is it?

Baron. Make her happy, then.

Prosp. [*shaking hands*]. I should be delighted to oblige you, but——

Baron. And make me happy, too.

Prosp. But, my dear sir, have you maturely considered what you are proposing to me?

Baron. Do you think, sir, I would permit you to refuse a lady so closely allied to me—after proffering her the most ardent attachment—the satisfaction she has a right to demand?

Prosp. Surely Madame de la Glacière could never have sent you to——

Baron. I must insist, sir, you don't mix up my wife's name in this business.

Prosp. But how the deuce, sir, am I to do otherwise! Oh, I have had enough of this—you'll drive me mad, famished as I am. Do what you like—fight, or go to the——

Baron. Not another word—time and place?

Prosp. [*exasperated*]. When you please!

Enter SUZANNE *and* LOUISE *hastily from the dining-room.*

Suz. [*aside*]. This is what I feared.

Louise [*aside*]. A challenge! all is lost!

Suz. [*throwing herself between them*]. Ah, Prosper! has the Baron's persuasion, then—[*crosses*]—had no more power over you than my tears?

Prosp. [*surprised*]. Hey! what?

Suz. Would you wish to see me at your feet?

Baron. Never would I suffer such a humiliation!

Prosp. [*aside*]. What the deuce *does* all this mean?

Suz. But when I swear, Prosper, that I never deceived you. [*Low to him.*] Back me up in all I say. [*Aloud.*] It was only a misapprehension. [*Aside.*] Back me up.

Prosp. [*bewildered*]. But I don't see——

Suz. [*low to him*]. Don't be stupid! [*Aloud.*] You don't see that you break my heart?

Prosp. Break your heart!

Suz. Yes, my loving heart and you are still silent! Speak, sir, speak!

Baron. Now, sir, what have you to say?

Prosp. I have to say—— I have to say—— [*Aside.*] Oh, I have her now! [*Aloud.*] That if all she says be true——

Suz. Can you doubt me, Prosper? [*Apart to him.*] That's right, go on—go on!

Prosp. [*aside*]. That's right, is it? Just you wait a bit. [*Aloud.*] And you swear that you have never been faithless to me?

Suz. Oh, never, never! [*Apart to him.*] Go on—go on!

Prosp. That you love me still?

Suz. Love you! oh, yes!

Prosp. Then, Madam, I own that I, too, love—adore you! I swear it before these witnesses of our mutual affection.

Suz. [*apart to him*]. That will do now! Quite enough!

Prosp. And I am ready to marry you, Madam, as soon as you will.

Suz. In make believe, of course. [*Apart to him.*]

Prosp. [*aside*]. Deuce a bit! in downright earnest! [*Aloud.*] Come to my arms, Suzanne!

Suz. [*springing back*]. You go too far, sir—you go too far.

Baron [*pushing her into* PROSPER's *arms*]. Never mind us, Suzanne; it's all in the family. Embrace him, I tell you.

Prosp. [*embracing her*]. Oh, Suzanne!

Suz. Oh, Prosper! [*Apart to him.*] You horrid traitor!

Prosp. I think I've caught you now.

Suz. [*aside*]. Don't make too sure of that.

Enter MADEMOISELLE ZENOBIE *and* MATHILDE, *from the dining-room*—BRISEMOUCHE—*then* BAPTISTE *and* PAULINE.

[*During the following,* SERVANTS *hand coffee*—BRISEMOUCHE *is alone in front, holding a piece of paper in his hand; he is slightly intoxicated.*]

Brise. It is a love letter!—a love letter to Zenobie! I shouldn't have believed it, if I hadn't seen—with my own eyes seen—the young woman slip it under her plate. [*Reading.*] "I am obliged to leave home by daylight, dearest love." Now, who the deuce could ever call Zenobie "dearest love?" [*Reading again.*] "But far or near, my soul will follow thine." All this to Zenobie! It is incredible! but here it is. Ah, here's a chance—if I could but get rid of Zenobie—force the fellow to marry her—what a piece of good luck it would be. [*Folds the paper in two.*]

Baron [*coming down with a cup of coffee in his hand*]. Don't you take coffee? [*Drops down.*]

Brise. [*aside*]. Ah—an idea! [*Gives paper to the* BARON.] Do you know that handwriting?

Baron. This? [*As he opens the paper,* PROSPER *is coming down with a cup of coffee in his hand, and observes the* BARON *reading the reverse side to that read by* BRISEMOUCHE.] "They wanted to send me away, but I have returned."

Brise. Nonsense—"returned"—he said he was obliged to go.

Baron [*continuing to read*]. "They say I must continue my studies."

Brise. Nonsense—"studies"—no, no—"dearest love."

Baron. No—"studies"—it is written in pencil!

Brise. No—"dearest love" in ink. [*Takes letter and turns over to the other side.*] There—it is there! [*Gives back letter to the* BARON.]

Prosp. [*coming down hastily*]. The letter! [*Snatching it from the* BARON.]

Baron [*still laughing*]. Come, let's see this wonderful letter.

Prosp. No, no; I can't allow it.

Brise. But why?

Prosp. [*quietly finishing his cup of coffee*]. Because I don't want to admit everybody into my confidence. [*Gives his empty cup to* BRISEMOUCHE *to hold.*]

Brise. Then you wrote that letter?

Prosp. Well, and if I did?

Brise. What! unworthy friend, you have taken advantage of being under my roof to make love to Zenobie—delude her innocence——

Baron. He! make love to Zenobie?

Brise. But, of course, he will take her off my hands—I mean marry her?

Baron [*giving his empty cup to* BRISEMOUCHE *to hold*]. What does all this mean, sir? This morning you make love to Mathilde—this evening you promise to marry Suzanne—and all the while you are making love to Zenobie.

Brise. Don't you call Zenobie "dearest love?"

Prosp. Never dreamed of such a thing!

Brise. But the proof is that scrap of paper.

Baron. Yes—show us the scrap of paper—what is it?

Prosp. As you say—a mere scrap of paper. [*Shows it behind his back to* SUZANNE.]

Suz. [*to* LOUISE, *alarmed*]. It is the letter!

Louise [*alarmed*]. The letter!

Prosp. [*coolly*]. But as you seem to attach some mystery to this scrap of paper, I request Mademoiselle Suzanne—my wife—to judge of its contents. [*Holds out paper to* SUZANNE.]

Baron [*seizing letter to the alarm of* PROSPER *and* SUZANNE]. So be it—Suzanne shall read and judge!

Suz. It is unnecessary—quite. I know what it contains. [*Takes the paper.*]

Baron. You know?

Suz. Yes—a mere bit of folly—a joke.

Brise. A joke! a joke! The chance of getting rid of Zenobie is no joke!

Baron. Beware, Suzanne—your life's happiness may be concerned. [*Crosses to* SUZANNE.]

Suz. Well, even if it be? [*Gives paper to* PROSPER, *and holds a lighted candle which she takes from a table close by her.*] Burn it, my good friend.

Baron. Suzanne!

Suz. [*holding candle*]. Burn—burn!

Baron. Ah! you're a happy man to marry such a woman who trusts you so implicitly.

Prosp. I know I am. [*Burns the letter and puts the taper on one of the coffee cups held by* BRISEMOUCHE—*looking at the ashes of letter.*] Oh, you confounded little rascal of a scrap of paper! what a peck of troubles you have put me in.

Brise. [*holding the two cups of coffee and taper*]. I take my oath I saw the words "dearest love."

Zen. [*coming down*]. What's that you are saying?

Suz. My dear Mademoiselle Zenobie, I've a piece of pleasant intelligence to communicate. We've just made up a match between Monsieur Anatole——

Zen. [*simpering*]. Oh, dear—spare my feelings!

Suz. And my little cousin Mathilde.

Anat. [*springing forward from the bushes*]. Oh! what joy! [*Drops down.*]

Zen. [*aside*]. The little wretch was there all the time.

Anat. [*kissing the hand of* MATHILDE]. I am so happy.

Prosp. [*to* SUZANNE]. And so am I.

Suz. [*low to him*]. I have no doubt you are. You have given your word to start to-night for the Cannibal Islands.

Prosp. By all means—but not without my wife.

Suz. What! do you want to eat me up?

Prosp. With love!

Louise. Suzanne—you must give in, you know.

Suz. [*smiling*]. Well, it seems fated I am to sacrifice myself for others.

Prosp. Yes: to ensure my happiness.

Louise. Your own as well.

Prosp. And the contentment of all around, I trust.

Suz. [*looking at the ashes*]. And all on account of a mere SCRAP OF PAPER.

FROU FROU

By Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Gymnase on October 30, 1869.

Argument: Frou Frou, a pretty, light-headed, spoiled child, marries Count Sartorys on the advice of her sister Louise, who is in love with him and appreciates his admirable qualities, but she neglects her duties as a wife, and Louise, who comes to live with her, has to take charge of the household. Later, when Frou Frou tries to recover her position, her husband and sister refuse to take her seriously, and in a fit of jealousy she runs away with an old lover. Will she regret her action, and will her husband seek vengeance?

Frou Frou is a pet name that Mademoiselle Gilberte de Brigard says nobody but her papa and sister Louise may call her, but Count Paul de Valréas declares that no other name could be better suited to so delightful a little person as herself, for whom it seems to have been especially invented. One hears a door open, he says, and down the stairs comes a rustling flutter of silken skirts sweeping along like a whirlwind—Frou Frou! Into the room with a twirl—now here, now there, arranging, disarranging, prattling, pouting, laughing, singing, skipping, piano-rattling, dancing—and off again in the twinkling of an eye. Frou Frou! Always Frou Frou! But it happens that Valréas has something more serious to say to her this very day—astoundingly serious. In that case, she replies, it can wait, for she has something still more serious to do, and that is to dress for dinner.

M. Brigard, Frou Frou's father, came to this place in the country only two years ago and bought the château known as "The Charmerettes," which is situated between châ-

teaux owned by two young bachelors, one of them Valréas, and the other Count Henry de Sartorys. The two young men have been very attentive to M. Brigard's daughters. Valréas intends to ask for the hand of Mlle. Gilberte, and thinks that Sartorys is on the point of asking for Louise. M. Brigard, however, puts a damper on Valréas' aspirations. He assures the young man that he likes him exceedingly, but as to giving him his daughter, he really cannot think of it. The fact is that Brigard and Valréas have had rivalries over more than one chorus girl, and Brigard knows that one of these young women has been at Valréas' home for the last four days.

Valréas. Four days! And how long have I kept away from my roof and taken shelter under yours? For forty-eight hours. If that doesn't prove that I intend to break with my past life——

Brigard. Take two from four and you have—— There are the first forty-eight hours unreckoned.

Val. I'm like Hercules at the crossroads. I've abandoned Pleasure to follow Virtue, finding her the most beautiful of the two, for your daughter is deucedly fascinating, sir.

Brig. Yes, you're quite right there.

Val. And besides that, she has a sort of——

Brig. Yes, it runs in the family. But that doesn't matter. As I said before, it's not the thing to come and talk to a father about marrying his daughter when at the very same moment there's a——

Val. Yes, you're right. When you say anything reasonable I admit it at once. It's evident that somebody at home must be politely requested to—— But the thing is, how to—— A friend now, who would be kind enough to act for one, is what is needed.

Brig. A friend, eh?

Val. Yes. A friend sufficiently accustomed to these sort of things to be able to arrange it pleasantly.

They look each other in the face for a moment and then burst out laughing.

Brig. By Jove, if you mean it——

Val. Certainly! Will you go?

Brig. In order to oblige you.

Val. Ah, that's good!

Brig. But don't tell Antonia Brunet.

Val. Antonia Brunet? Who is Antonia Brunet, any one I know? When will you go?

Brig. I'll go at once.

Val. All right. When you come back I shall address my suit to you formally.

Brig. What! You aren't going back to that. Here comes Louise. Talk to her about your great project.

Louise refuses even more firmly than her father to consider Valréas' proposal for her sister. He has just left when Sartorys enters.

Sartorys informs Louise that he has made up his mind to say this very day something that he has been longing to say for the last three months. Nevertheless, he seems so nervous that Louise suggests that he defer it to another time, but he proceeds. He is in love, and M. Brigard has authorized him to speak, or rather told him that he must address himself especially to her.

Sartorys. Have you not divined? I love . . .

Louise. You love?

Sar. Deeply—your sister Gilberte.

He goes on without looking at Louise and asks if she approves of the marriage. After the first shock is over Louise assures him that he is just the husband that she should have chosen for her sister, for she knows no better, worthier man. She withdraws her hands from his grasp and strives to hide her emotion. He asks her to say all the good of him she can to Gilberte, but not to dwell too much upon the serious side of his nature and the soberness of his demeanor. He goes out on the lawn to walk up and down while Louise undertakes his commission.

Gilberte is surprised to learn that Sartorys is in love with her, as Louise is the one he ought to love, but she leaves it to Louise to decide whether she shall accept him, as she says it is too serious a question for her. Louise advises her to do so. Gilberte is afraid that her faults are of a kind that would make Sartorys wretched.

Gilberte. He'll cure me of them, you think? Ah, I'm not so sure of that! I've always been a spoilt child, you know; and the worst of it is, with regard to those darling faults of mine, that I'm resolved I *won't* be cured of them; being most decidedly satisfied with my little self just as

I am. Ah! depend upon it, the struggle between him and me for the upper hand will be a great deal more serious than you think for. I know that he has a firm will of his own; but though it were proved to me that he's competent to manage the whole world, that wouldn't at all prove to me that he is therefore competent to manage—Frou Frou.

Louise. He loves you; Gilberte.

Gil. Are you very sure?

Louise. Did you not see a little while ago?

Gil. [*a pause; she reflects*]. And so it is me he loves. [*Laughs.*] What a funny idea. [*Rises.*]

Louise [*animated; rising*]. Is it nothing to be loved by such a man? To see that he trembles before you like a child? [*Still more animated.*] It seems to me if I were asked who is it I love, I should say with pride: "Look for the man who is superior to every one about him—it is he."

Gil. [*going to her and putting her arms around her waist*]. Do you know one thing, sister Louise?

Louise. What is it?

Gil. I will not marry Monsieur Sartorys.

Louise. Why?

Gil. [*demurely*]. Because, up to this time, I thought that *you* loved him; and now—I am sure of it.

Louise. I?

Gil. [*patting* LOUISE'S *cheek*]. Yes, you.

Louise [*very quietly*]. If I loved him I would not advise you to marry him.

Gil. [*moving away*]. Louise, I'm become afraid of you. I believe you are—first, capable of sacrificing yourself for me and then of being proud of the sacrifice.

Louise [*going to* GILBERTE *and putting her arm about her waist*]. Then, this time, little sister, you are wrong. My affection for you is certainly very great, but however great it might be, if I loved I would not——

[*An imperceptible look of pain passes over her face, not seen by* GILBERTE.]

Gil. [*doubtingly, and looking down*]. Do you speak truly?

Louise [*gayly*]. Absolutely. And if you have no other objection to this union——

Gil. Objections! Oh, I've plenty of them; but I don't know whether they amount to anything. So I will do as I have always done—place myself in your hands. Must

I say yes or no? [LOUISE *about to speak.*] Do not answer too quickly. Be serious; and before answering think of everything.

Louise. I have thought of everything.

Gil. And you believe——

Louise. I believe that Monsieur Sartorys will be too happy with you for you not to be always happy with him.

Gil. [*smiling*]. So I must answer yes?

Louise [*kissing her*]. You must answer yes.

When the family and guests are assembled for dinner Valréas quickly perceives that something momentous has happened. Brigard confirms his suspicion by saying that now he hopes Valréas will leave him in peace.

Val. Then it strikes me that I'd better go back to "somebody."

Brig. "Somebody's" gone, my boy!

Val. Gone?

Brig. Yes.

Val. In a rage, I suppose?

Brig. Oh, no, no! Perfectly willing to change her —residence.

The flight of four years has wrought little change in Gilberte. She has a little boy whom she regards about as seriously as if he were a doll. At the present moment she is very much taken up with preparations for a theatrical performance in which she is going to appear with Valréas, who is still as attentive as before her marriage. She is trying over the music for the part with a prompter from a theatre when Sartorys comes in. He seems somewhat surprised, but she declares that he gave his consent. It is for the performance that Mme. de Cambri is getting up for the benefit of charity.

Gilberte continues to peruse the manuscript of her part while Sartorys talks to her. He tells her that he has something important to decide, but she interrupts to ask what the costume of a débardeur is. He replies that it consists of a loose silken chemise and knee breeches of velvet or satin.

Gil. I'll never wear that, even for the poor. Go on with what you were saying. I'm listening.

Sar. Well, I saw the Minister of Foreign Affairs this morning.

Gil. [*eagerly*]. Is he coming?

Sar. Where?

Gil. To see the performance!

Sar. I didn't tell him, but I will the next time. We spoke of an appointment they have for me. They want me to accept a post abroad.

Gil. [*alarmed*]. Abroad?

Sar. There's no future for me in Paris.

Gil. And what do they offer you abroad?

Sar. The position of minister at Carlsruhe.

Gil. Minister at Carlsruhe! Is it nice to be minister at Carlsruhe?

Sar. Very nice indeed.

Gil. And how far is Carlsruhe from Paris?

Sar. I don't know exactly—three or four hundred miles; fifteen hours by rail.

Gil. As far off as Baden?

Sar. It is very near Baden.

Gil. [*rising*]. Near Baden! why didn't you say so before. You said it was abroad. I'll tell you how we'll manage it. [SARTORYS *rises.*] You shall be minister to Carlsruhe—that's settled. [SARTORYS *takes her hand.*] I'll go and pass the summer with you at Baden, and the balance of the year you will come to Paris and see me as often as you can.

Sar. What!

Gil. [*gleefully and rapidly*]. And I may—but mind, I don't promise it—I may come and surprise you at Carlsruhe.

Sar. [*in a tone of disappointment*]. But——

Gil. [*stopping, astonished*]. Why, you didn't think of taking me to Carlsruhe?

Sar. Why, yes.

Gil. Alone—we two way off there—all the year?

Sar. Why not?

Gil. But that would be to die—of happiness, I know—but to die, nevertheless. [*Smiling and coaxingly.*] Come, you were not serious? Can you imagine Frou Frou without Paris?

Sar. Well, to tell you the truth, I did! [GILBERTE *turns away pettishly.*] But I see I must do one of two things; go to Carlsruhe without you or decline the mission.

Gil. Well.

Sar. I have decided.

Gil. [*interested*]. You will go without me?

Sar. No; I will decline.

Gil. Ah, that will be right. [*Goes to him.*]

Sar. Do you think so? I doubt it myself. But one thing I'm sure of—I haven't the heart to leave you.

Gil. [*putting her arm about him*]. You love me, then, a little still, after four years of marriage?

Sar. Yes, Gilberte! and I am only afraid that I do not know how to love.

Gil. [*archly*]. Oh, yes, you do. You know very well, for the very best way to love a wife is to let her do everything she wishes—because then, you know, the wife is bound in honor to do everything her husband wishes.

Sar. [*taking her hands in his*]. Then, if I asked you something——

Gil. After what you have done for me, can you doubt?

Sar. Then, suppose I ask you not to play at this performance.

Gil. [*withdrawing her hands*]. Oh, my love.

Sar. Well?

Gil. I thought you were going to ask me something reasonable. It is impossible for me to refuse to play now; and then, you will see how pretty I will look in a débardeur costume—if they insist on it. But in anything I'm sure to be pretty, and you will be so proud of me.

Brigard is glad to find Gilberte at home for he is going away for a while and wants her to ask Louise to stay with her. He is going to Prague for three or four months with a friend. He cannot take Louise, and she has been talking of going into a convent. Gilberte is delighted at the idea of having Louise with her. Louise has always refused to visit her before, and now she will have to accept. She wishes that Louise would make her home with her permanently.

The Baroness de Cambri comes to hear Gilberte rehearse a scene with Valréas. She thinks that Valréas ought to play very well, he is so desperately in love with Gilberte, and in order to prove that he is she tells him when he comes that Sartorys has accepted the diplomatic post and that Gilberte is going with him to Carlsruhe immediately after the performance. Valréas seems deeply moved, but the

Baroness reassures him, and they begin the rehearsal. There is one point at which Gilberte and Valréas meet in a doorway and are supposed to kiss, a piece of business of which she disapproves, though it is the chief attraction of the play for Valréas. He and the Baroness succeed in gaining her consent, as it is for the benefit of the poor. Passing his arm gently around her waist, he touches her hair lightly with his lips just as Louise comes in.

The rehearsal is called off for the day, and Gilberte asks Louise to make her home there. Louise refuses, but Gilberte is persistent. Sartorys soon returns and she presents the situation to him. She says he must make Louise see that it will be doing a great service to both of them for her to stay; that there are heaps of things to see after in connection with the housekeeping; the dullest of domestic duties seem to delight Louise; and besides, little George idolizes her. Gilberte hasn't time to say any more, having to dress to go out to dinner. She leaves them hastily.

Sar. [*seriously*]. Louise! [*Taking her hands.*] You will render Gilberte and myself a great service by staying with us; for then *something* that is very much needed in this house will be needed no longer.

Louise [*withdrawing her hands*]. What is needed here?

Sar. A wife.

Louise. What is this you tell me?

Sar. I say that what is needed in this household is a wife; and you know it, although you pretend that you do not.

Sartorys admits that the child has a place in Gilberte's heart, but says that weeks will sometimes pass during which she sees him for about five minutes only in the morning, and again for another five minutes at night. He entreats her to remain and take charge of the domestic duties which Gilberte neglects and which he has not the moral courage to insist upon her fulfilling. Louise is finally persuaded.

Gilberte enters in evening dress. Little George is holding to her skirt as she comes forward hurriedly, engrossed in her engagement elsewhere. Sartorys tells her that Louise will remain.

Gil. Then this is a good day's work. I'm so glad. [*Goes toward* LOUISE, *but perceives that* GEORGIE *has hold of*

her skirt.] Take care, take care; you will tear me! [*Repulses him brusquely, and looks at her gown.*]

Louise. Come to me, Georgie.

Gil. Yes, go to your aunt.

[GEORGIE *runs to* LOUISE *and embraces her.*]

Gil. You see you did well to remain. Your duties begin at once. You will all dine together very nicely. But let me see: before I go, I must install you. [*To* SARTORYS, *seating him in chair.*] Now, here are your letters, and your papers, and your darling politics. [*She spreads on the table before* SARTORYS *the letters, etc., which* VINCENT *brought in.*] And you, Louise, you will sit there in my place. [*Places armchair by chimney, to which* LOUISE *crosses with* GEORGIE.]

Gil. [*going*]. Now, I must be off. [*Stops in doorway and looks back.*] How charming you all look that way. [*Laughing.*] A delightful little family group. [*Kissing her hand to each.*] For you. [*To* LOUISE.] For Georgie. For you. [*To* SARTORYS.]

[*Exits laughing with childish glee.*

When Mme. de Cambri assured Gilberte that Valréas was deeply in love with her it was the first time that a serious thought had ever entered Gilberte's head. Having once gained admittance it opened the door to others. She discovered that Louise had quietly taken her place in the house. At the end of two months she has taken a decided step, the first by which she means to recover her rightful position in the household. It was to write to Valréas to demand his immediate departure from Paris. She intends to lead a wholly different life. The Baroness, to whom she has confided her intentions, advises her not to be a stupid, jealous wife, but she has become quite frightened. As soon as the Baroness has gone she sends word to her husband that she wishes to see him.

Louise enters, dressed to go out, as Sartorys comes from his study.

Gil. [*to* LOUISE]. Where are you going?

Louise. To Madame de Lussy's; she recommends the new governess we have engaged for Georgie.

Gil. [*aside*]. *We* have engaged! [*Aloud.*] I will go myself.

Sar. [*laughingly*]. If you go to Madame de Lussy's I know in advance what will happen. You will both chat for an hour over some new toilet, and never once think of the governess. Let Louise go.

Gil. [*turning away*]. Be it so.

Louise [*to* SARTORYS]. Don't forget that you are to go at three o'clock to see about that property we wish to buy.

Sar. [*gayly*]. I shan't forget.

Gil. [*aside*]. That *we* wish to buy.

Louise. Is that all? Yes—let me see! yes, that is all By-by, Frou Frou! [*Kisses* GILBERTE, *and exits.*

Sar. [*his manner is paternal—a little too paternal, during this scene*]. Well, my darling! [*Brings his chair and makes* GILBERTE *sit on a stool beside him.*]

Gil. [*holding down her head*]. I wanted to tell you—that is——

Sar. Is it something very hard to say, then?

Gil. Yes, very hard—it is something like a confession.

Sar. [*earnestly*]. A confession?

Gil. I was going to accuse myself——

Sar. Ah, I see; we have been extravagant—we have run into debt, Frou Frou? [*Patting her head.*]

Gil. [*impatiently*]. No, it is not that.

Sar. Of what have you to accuse yourself then?

Gil. Can you not imagine? [SARTORYS *shakes his head.*] Of having been a little frivolous and giddy—even after our marriage, even after the birth of little Georgie—in fact, of having always remained Frou Frou, and of not having become——

Sar. Is that all? Why, you almost frightened me. I see nothing very dreadful in all that.

Gil. Nothing?

Sar. Nothing at all!

Gil. But some time ago you spoke differently. No, you did not speak, but in place of words your face, your silence itself seemed to utter the fears that troubled you then, and to show me the danger that threatened. [*Putting her hand on his shoulder.*]

Sar. Yes, that was two months ago, but since those two months——

Gil. Since then——

Sar. Louise has been here.

Gil. Louise!

Sar. All the danger has disappeared; and now if it should please Frou Frou to be more Frou Frou than ever, the harm would not be very great, since in your place Louise does everything.

Gil. And how if I wished to attend myself to those things which my sister takes such good care of?

Sar. What an idea, now that everything is working so smoothly and safely.

Gil. You think everything is safe?

Sar. Look around you, my dear Gilberte, and tell me if you ever saw a house better governed than ours since Louise has taken control. See what care she takes of Georgie, and how well she is bringing up the child; and even I myself, have you not noticed that since Louise has been here I have acquired a certain air of content?

Gil. [*earnestly*]. But if I really wished—if I were really resolved to become better and wiser, and to govern myself?

Sar. Your zeal is too praiseworthy not to be encouraged, and I will encourage it by all the means in my power, but——

Gil. But what?

Sar. But if, despite your resolution and my encouragement, this ardor should die out, and at the end of a week, or say a fortnight, my little Gilberte becomes wearied, don't consider yourself bound to continue! Return as fast as you please to your pleasures, your triumphs, and your gayeties; neither my face nor my silence shall reproach you, and I shall be content to remain the husband of the prettiest darling and most adored little wife in the world.

Gil. [*rising and speaking quietly*]. That appointment which was offered you, and which you refused on my account?

Sar. No, I cannot go there now. Government might have felt hurt at my refusal, but, on the contrary, I have been treated with marked kindness, and I have now in Paris a position almost equivalent to the other. All's well that ends well, and so you see, you really have not as much to reproach yourself with as you thought.

Gil. [*looks at him peculiarly for a second*]. What I really see is that all my beautiful projects are rejected.

Sar. Oh, I give you full credit for them.

Gil. [*sarcastically*]. Really.

Sar. [*going to her*]. And I wish to reward you for them. That span of horses you liked so much, and which I thought so expensive—

Gil. I don't want them now.

At this moment Gilberte's father arrives and Sartorys resigns to him the task of wheedling her out of the sulks. Brigard does not imagine that Gilberte is very seriously upset about anything. His errand at the house is twofold. A lady of his acquaintance whom he gives a German name, evidently thinking it has a respectable sound, wishes to borrow a tocque that she has seen Gilberte wearing, in order to copy it.

The other matter is more serious. M. de Villaroël who has called so often at the house of late is in love with Louise and wishes to marry her. Gilberte sees her salvation in this opportunity. Villaroël is considered a charming man, and has a great name and large fortune. Gilberte sees no reason why Louise should refuse. Brigard reminds her, however, that Louise has said that she intends never to marry. He thinks she has been crossed in love.

Although Valréas wrote in reply to Gilberte's note that he would go away, he comes to see her before doing so. She is inclined not to receive him, but tells the maid to show him in, and also to have Georgie dressed to go to walk with her. Valréas declares that he means to go, but says he could not resist coming to bid her farewell. To indicate that he need not take long about it she informs him that she is going out with her child, but at that moment the maid returns and says that Louise has taken Georgie with her.

Gil. [*passionately*]. Louise! [*Trying to control herself.*] Very well, Pauline, since Mademoiselle Louise has taken him. [PAULINE *goes out. To herself.*] My child no more! There is no safeguard left—none—none!

Val. Yes, I swear to you that I will go away.

Gil. You know well that I do not love you, that I should never love you. You ought to know it well—and you love me! That is why I want you to go. Understand me thoroughly. If I were frivolous, as they say, and heartless and bad, I should keep you about me, and it would entertain me to make you suffer. Plenty of

women conduct themselves in that way. But I—will not do it—you shall go. You will forget me. Yes, it must be so. Forget me—but not too quickly.

Val. [*taking her hands*]. Oh, Gilberte! Gilberte!

Gil. [*disengaging her hands*]. To-night, won't you? Go to-night.

The return of Sartorys terminates the interview. When Gilbert tells Sartorys that Louise is going to leave them to be married, he starts up with a cry that it is impossible, and he is relieved to find that Louise has not yet decided the matter. Louise comes in presently. She is also surprised at the news. M. de Villaroël, she says, is one of the most distinguished men of the age, and, of course, his proposal causes her some feeling of pride, and not a little pleasure. Gilberte, hanging intently on her words, flings herself back in her chair with passionate impatience as Louise adds that when it becomes known that she has refused to marry such a man it will be understood that she does not mean to marry anybody.

Sartorys urges Louise to consider her own happiness. She replies that to be happy she must remain where she is, and he laughingly tells Gilberte that when Louise has once made up her mind it is useless to say anything more. Still, if Gilberte wishes to try, he has no objection.

Gil. [*shortly*]. Yes, I shall try.

Sar. I have not changed my opinion, my dear Louise, and I think that you ought to accept. But you have given me so much pleasure by refusing that I don't feel equal to pressing the matter further, at least for the present.

Louise. Neither now nor later.

Sar. [*pressing her hand*]. As for that——

Louise. To what purpose? What I say to-day you know very well I shall say forever.

Sartorys goes off to his study. Louise moves toward the back of the room to leave, but Gilberte rises quickly and intercepts her by passing behind the piano, meeting her face to face.

Gil. Where are you going?

Louise. To get a book that Georgie asked me for; it is in your room.

Gil. Georgie will wait for his book. [LOUISE *steps back*

astonished at the tone and look of GILBERTE.] So, you refuse this marriage which is offered you?

Louise. Why—yes, I refuse.

Gil. Oh! And is it so as to continue watching over the happiness of both of us?

Louise. Gilberte! [*Shrinking back a step.*]

Gil. A worthy reason. [*Advancing a step.*] And I ought to thank you for it. But what I have to blame you for is that you have not equally divided your attentions in this household between my husband and me, and for having bestowed them more cheerfully on one than on the other.

Louise. Good heavens!

Gil. That you have lavished your care upon my husband, upon my child, but me you have neglected. And there you were wrong, because, had you looked around you, you would have seen that of all the dangers which threaten this home that you wished to preserve so much, the gravest of all might strike it through me.

Louise. I do not understand you.

Gil. Within this hour M. de Valréas was here at my side swearing that he loved me. I told him that I did not love him.

Louise. Well?

Gil. It wasn't true. I love him.

Louise. Oh!

Gil. This is what you haven't seen with all your care, sister, and it is what you should have seen before everything if you had performed well that duty which you accepted at such heroic self-sacrifice.

Louise. Gilberte!

Gil. But I suppose that the absorbing attention you bestowed on one side hindered you from watching the other.

Louise. What you wish to tell me is that you love Valréas—is that it?

Gil. Two months ago there was no such thing; but within those two months many things have happened. That love has had time for birth and growth! What at first was but a game has become a danger—a danger so great that when I saw you had no thought of me, to saving me, I tried to save myself. My husband, my child, I

tried to return to them. But my child was no longer mine; you had come between us.

Louise. I will go, Gilberte. I will go!

Gil. You have estranged my child, and for my husband——

Louise. Your husband!

Gil. When I saw you just now beside him, I recalled the past—my suspicions of other times and my suspicions to-day.

Louise. Your suspicions?

Gil. Do not force me to say what I do not wish.

Louise. Say it! Speak the words which burn on your lips—that four years ago I loved your husband—is that it?

Gil. You dare speak of it?

Louise. Yes, I did love him, but it was you that *he* loved, and believing that your happiness depended upon his love, I took your hand myself and placed it in his, and that nothing should hinder your consent to that marriage I pretended to be glad, and yet, at that very moment, I sacrificed my heart for you—for I loved him! I loved him!

Gil. And by the next day, I suppose, your love had vanished.

Louise. Not so. I suffered long, and perhaps my sufferings and sacrifice merited another recompense than this. You have forgotten your repeated efforts to make me come and live with you, and the surprise that my refusal caused you. You have forgotten that I did refuse to come.

Gil. But you ended by consenting.

Louise. Because I had conquered myself; because I no longer loved him.

Gil. Indeed! Was it not rather because you thought the moment better chosen?

Louise. Gilberte, it is not yourself who speaks so!

Gil. Yes! Yes, it is I.

Louise. Gilberte! Sister! Was it not you who wished me——

Gil. Ah, you knew well how to make me wish that you desired most; you are wise, my sister, and I was but a child in your hands. You knew well what you were

doing after you had married us—after you had sacrificed yourself for us—since you knew one instant would suffice for you to regain all that you boast you have given me, since now he is *yours*.

Louise [*terrified*]. I will go, Gilberte. I will go!

Gil. Another sacrifice still. No! It is not you who will go.

Louise. What do you mean?

Gil. Heaven is my witness that I was sincere in my effort to resist, to defend myself; but I am not strong enough for a lifetime of such efforts. And when I succumb I shall have a right after all to love whoever loves me, since you and he——

Louise. What are you going to do?

Gil. I acknowledge that I am conquered! Take my place! I give it to you.

Louise. Where are you going?

Gil. You ask me too much!

Louise. Gilberte!

Gil. [*furiously*]. Husband, child, everything you have taken from me! Very well, keep everything!

Gilberte rushes into the other room and closes and locks the door. Louise runs and knocks on it, crying out to her, but there is no answer.

Six months later Gilberte is waiting for Valréas to come to dinner in the hall of an ancient palace in Venice. Her manner is subdued, with at times a touch of sadness. Pauline, who has followed her mistress in order to care for her, is rather distressed at the way bills have come in and are left unpaid. At last she informs Gilberte that the debts amount to 10,000 francs. A letter brings the news that Sartorys, who had been in danger of death for almost a month, is now recovering. When Gilberte is alone she looks about her and exclaims: "An hour of anger, and this is what it has brought me to!"

Valréas says he will explain why he is late to dinner. Gilberte seems almost surprised that he should offer to do so. His mother has been there for three days and is now going on to Rome. She hoped that he would accompany her. Gilberte in turn has something to tell him. She suspected that he was going to meet some one secretly,

followed his gondola in another, and saw him meet his mother. It surprises him to learn that she was afraid to tell him.

Gil. Oh, yes! And if I am somewhat reassured now it is because I see you laughing, and because I suspect although, as you laugh, I have nothing to fear——

Val. Of what are you afraid?

Gil. She hates me, doesn't she?

Val. Oh, my mother loves me so much that she couldn't hate those who——

Gil. Those who love you. Why don't you say it?

Val. Those who love me. There.

Gilberte knows too that the Baron and Baroness de Cambri have also come to Venice, and she had hoped that the Baroness would come to see her. Still, she says she ought not to care, as she has Valréas.

Gil. I should not forget that you are my entire life now, and I shall be happy as long as you do not forget it.

Val. Why say such things? You know well that I shall never forget you.

He picks up a French newspaper, and she looking over his shoulder, they begin to read the advertisements of the plays in Paris, speaking alternately, "The Outcast," "The Last Day of Happiness," "Patrie," at the Porte-Saint-Martin. Their voices become grave, finally sad. The paper falls from Valréas' hand. They remain silent a moment, looking at each other. Then she says it gave her a queer feeling to read that paper, and asks if he feels regret.

Val. I!

Gil. Speak! You do *not* regret?

Val. Decidedly!

Gil. You love me truly, don't you?

Val. Yes, I love you.

Pauline shows in the Baron and Baroness de Cambri. The two women clasp each other in a long embrace. The Baroness says that if her husband had not consented to her coming she should have slipped out and come all alone. They sit on a sofa while the two men talk together. Cambri does not wish to be thanked. He has come on a mission which has been entrusted to him by Sartorys. Valréas

replies that there are certain things which are bound to come to pass, and yet which one never thinks about. He smiles, but he is thinking of death.

Turning to the ladies, Valréas says he is going out with the Baron to have a chat. Gilberte inquires if they are going to his mother's, and if he is coming back. Looking into her eyes, and restraining his emotion with difficulty, he says "Adieu!"

Gil. For a little while.

Val. Yes, for a little while.

[*He goes out with the* BARON.

Gilberte is anxious to hear news of her child. The Baroness left Georgie with his governess and says he gave her a kiss for herself and several kisses for his mother. As soon as it was seen that Sartorys was not going to die Louise took Georgie and went back to live in the country at "The Charmerettes" with him and her father. The Baroness says that every one sympathized with Gilberte, and that even those who had been severe in their judgments were sorry for her when they heard that she had returned to her husband, for George, her dowry of 2,000,000 francs, which he had forwarded to her.

Pauline enters suddenly, looking very frightened. Gilberte goes to her and asks what is the matter. They converse in low tones for a moment, and then Gilberte requests the Baroness to step into the next room and wait until she calls, but makes her promise not to go away, not to abandon her. Pauline goes to the rear of the room and opens the door. Sartorys enters. He is pale, thin, frightfully changed.

Gil. You?

Sar. I.

Gil. I knew that you had been very, very sick; that you were almost——

Sar. Yes, they told me that I was so ill, I must not hope. But you see I am not dead. When sufficient of my strength returned to me, I had some business to settle with you. I came.

Gil. Some business—with me?

Sar. Yes, about——[*He braces himself against back of chair.* GILBERTE *goes toward him; he recovers himself with emotion.*] 'Tis nothing. I beg your pardon. I am still

very—very—my throat is on fire—water—I can hardly speak——

Gil. Water? [*Goes to table, pours water in one of the glasses, and brings to* SARTORYS, *who, noticing the double set on the table, points to them and refuses to take the glass.* GILBERTE, *in despair, staggers back to table and sets down the glass.*] Heaven help me!

Sar. It was about your dowry.

Gil. My dowry? [*Turning toward him again.*]

Sar. Yes, the money which you sent back to Paris. You must take it . I will not leave you exposed to——

Gil. I have already said—I do not need it!

Sar. I know, I know, but you must.

Gil. No, I will take nothing——

Sar. Then will you force me to give you another reason? [GILBERTE *looks at him with frightened face.*] I do not wish my son ever to touch one cent of that money. I will not have it. You understand?

Gil. [*sinks into chair*]. Yes.

Sar. And so that no one else should be compelled to tell you, I have come myself; and I leave you this.

He lays large envelope, heavily sealed, on table beside her and takes one step toward door.

Gil. You are going?

Sar. Yes, now that everything is concluded——

Gil. You are going to fight him!

Sar. Yes! You expected it, did you not? And I swear to you, if I had had the strength to come sooner——

Gil. [*C.*]. You, you fight, and for me? For me? [*Hysterical laugh.*] Frou Frou! Think of it—Frou Frou means frivolity, trifles, dresses. What fearful fate is it then which throws me amongst things so terrible as bloodshed and death. [*He starts toward door; she stops him by running before and throwing herself at his knees, clasping her hands before him.*] You shall not fight! What! a man like you to risk a precious life, and for a woman like me? [*In tears.*] There must be some other way to satisfy your honor.

Sar. [*bitterly*]. My honor!

Gil. The world, no matter what you may do, can never doubt your courage!

Sar. You are mistaken if you believe it is of *my honor* I think of now, or that I have troubled myself one instant

with what the world has thought of your fault or what it may think of my vengeance. I am not a husband who comes to kill the lover of his wife! I loved you—you have betrayed me because you love another—and I shall try to kill that other—that is all. [*Goes toward door.*]

Gil. No, no, I alone am guilty. Crush me, but me alone. [*Clings to him—he tries to disengage himself.*]

Sar. Release me.

Gil. What vengeance do you want? I dare not speak of death for myself—I would not have the courage to die—but there are convents—close by there is one—take me there—I will go gladly—let its gates close upon me and never again shall you hear of the woman who has offended you.

Sar. [*still struggling to get away*]. I told you——

Gil. Is that not enough?—Think of some other punishment—anything—but do not condemn me to live with the horrible thought that a man has died through me!

Sar. [*trying to unclasp* GILBERTE'S *fingers*]. All this is useless.

Gil. Mercy!

Sar. No!

Gil. Henri!

Sar. [*striving to free himself by main strength*]. Oh!

Gil. Do not go—I will love you!

He repulses her; she faints, still holding his hand; he drags her a few steps, still trying to open her fingers; when he does, she falls across a chair. He starts to go out; at the back he stops, returns and looks at Gilberte a few minutes as if demented. The Baroness enters. Sartorys, without saying a word, points to Gilberte and withdraws.

Later when Cambri comes back it is with the news that Valréas is mortally wounded.

Some time after the death of Valréas Pauline goes to Paris to see little George in behalf of his mother, and from her Sartorys learns that Gilberte has contracted a dangerous illness while nursing among the poor. Immediately after Louise arrives and asks Sartorys if he will oblige Gilberte to die without seeing her child. He is willing to have the child go to its mother, but will not take it as Louise desires.

Louise. She is dying, struck by your hand. You are avenged, but after being avenged one pardons.

Sar. I cannot.

Louise. Has not her atonement been hard enough, all that she has suffered?

Sar. What she has suffered! Look about you . . . this deserted house, the abandoned child . . . look at me and say whether she or I have suffered the most.

Louise. She is dying, and she is waiting for you.

Sar. Do you wish me to lie? I might do what you want, I can say that I forgive her without forgiveness being in my heart. The wound was too cruel, the suffering too great.

Louise. Greater suffering has been forgiven you. I speak of a mother——

Sar. Louise——

Louise. Whose son you killed. She has seen Gilberte and pardoned her and you.

Sar. Ah! You women are helped to do such things by religion. Take the child and go with him.

Brigard enters and says that Gilberte has insisted upon coming. Louise runs to the door and assists Gilberte to cross the room. When Gilberte is near Sartorys she takes a few steps unaided and falls on her knees. Brigard goes to her quickly.

Gil. Not you, father, not you.

Sartorys rushes to her, raises her and takes her in his arms.

Sar. Oh! Gilberte! Gilberte!

Gil. Thank you! [*Sinking down on the sofa.*] At home! At home!

Sar. Yes, at home, Gilberte, at home. And you will not die. You shall stay here—always.

Gil. [*smiling*]. Always!

Sar. Gilberte! My Gilberte!

Gil. You pardon me, don't you?

Sar. Yes, yes, I pardon you and you shall not die.

Gil. As for that—— My son! Bring me my son.

Sartorys goes out and returns in a moment with George, who runs to his mother with a cry of joy. She holds him fast in a long embrace, kissing him.

George. She's come back!

Gil. Yes, but not for long, Georgie. Let me kiss you again—once more. [*She kisses the child repeatedly.*] Louise, and now he is yours. I give him to you.

Louise [*taking* GEORGE *in her arms*]. Gilberte!

Gil. And him also. [*Motioning toward* SARTORYS.] Take both of them. I said the same thing once before in this very spot. Forgive me, all of you. Come and—promise me, for Georgie's sake—it must be.

Sar. You shall not die! It is impossible.

Gil. Not die! [*She looks about at them. They are weeping.*] Oh, now that would be a pity.

Brigard. My daughter!

Gil. Do not mourn me, poor father. What should I have to look forward to, dying abandoned and hopeless. Instead of that I die among my own, peacefully, happy.

Sar. Oh, it was not you who needed pardon, but I who did not know——

Gil. Pardon, you? For what? Having loved me too much? That has been my misfortune. All have loved me too much.

Louise. Gilberte!

Gil. That is why I am dying. And that is why I die so happy. [*Falling back.*] Ah!

All [*thinking her dead*]. Gilberte!

Gil. [*raising her head slightly, supported by* SARTORYS]. And is this death, O God? It is an easy thing. Louise. Where are you, Louise? When I am dead you must make me as I used to be. Not in this black dress. Take one of my ball gowns, a white one with the skirt covered with little roses. That is the one I want. And you will see how pretty I shall be, as if you had Frou Frou back again.

Sar. Oh!

Gil. You shall see. Still the same—— My son, you will pardon me, won't you—Frou Frou, poor Frou Frou! [*She dies.*]

GETTING DIVORCED*

By Victorien Sardou and Emile de Najac

First played in Paris at the Palais-Royal on December 6, 1880.

Argument: After two years of marriage Henri des Prunelles finds that his wife has conceived a romantic fancy for a handsomer man and believes that her happiness lies in divorce. In the hope of shaking her resolve he pretends that he is equally eager to be rid of her. Will the husband seem attractive again, and will the gallant be exposed as a fraud?

Henri des Prunelles is a wealthy citizen of Rheims, a little over forty. His wife, Cyprienne, who is only twenty-five, has been reading up on divorce. The fact is, the couple seem so incompatible that they will have to separate. Des Prunelles explains to a friend that the rabbit married the duck, as in the fable. It was idiotic.

Des Prunelles. Weave into this story the arrival of a stupid dandy, embellished with irresistible cravats and dowered by nature with that fine perfume of stupidity that women inhale with drunken joy: "Ah! what a beauty he is and what a cipher! He will be all mine and I shall be his all in all!" Add to this that the insipid beauty is my cousin.

Clavignac. Adhemar!

Des P. The handsome Adhemar! now a government forester. He comes here with his military boots on, and makes a big noise with his spurs and cracks his whip. Imagine what kind of a figure I cut alongside of that musketeer!

There are still two reassuring symptoms from Des Pru-

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nelles' point of view. In the first place, his wife is stubborn in his company. When she begins to be charming he will know where he stands. And then, she is completely taken up with the idea of divorce, which proves that she has not yet taken the fatal step. When she does take it she won't care about divorce any more. He means to bring matters to a head by a great stroke.

He does not permit Adhemar to appear at the house publicly any more except on their regular "at home" days. But the "blackguard" has rented a room across the street and runs in through the garden whenever occasion favors. Des Prunelles, however, is a clever mechanician and has arranged a little trap for Mr. Man this afternoon. Des Prunelles will pull his ears. There will be a duel.

Clav. And he kills you!

Des P. And then—I'm at rest!

Clav. And this mouse-trap consists in——?

Des P. Oh, simple enough—a secret spring operated by a button. Hush! Here she comes!

Other visitors arrive, Monsieur Bafourdin, Mme. de Brionne, and finally Adhemar de Gratignan. Cyprienne starts when he is announced. Des Prunelles ignores his bow. Bafourdin remarks that he has seen an announcement in the paper that Adhemar has been appointed subforest inspector at Arcachon. Cyprienne is surprised not to have heard it from Adhemar, but he explains that he has refused the post.

In refusing advancement, Adhemar says impudently that he did so in order to remain in the bosom of his family. Des Prunelles assures Clavignac that there is going to be a duel. Cyprienne takes Adhemar a cup of tea, stirring it with a sentimental air. She does not wish her dear friend to make a sacrifice for her sake. He must accept.

Adhemar [*in a stage whisper*]. Leave you, Cyprienne! I'd die first!

Cyprienne [*in same tone*]. I must speak to you—at once!

Ad. At my apartments?

Cyp. [*quickly*]. At your apartments? Never! Later—perhaps. I won't say no.

Ad. Why not now?

Cyp. No, no! Here! Come when you see the signal

Hush! Some one is looking. [*Aloud.*] Monsieur de Clavignac, don't you drink tea?

There is general discussion of a bill before the Chamber of Deputies which is to make divorce free upon mutual consent. Cyprienne thinks that it should pass on account of the number of deputies who have an interest in it. Bafourdin declares it is the will of the people, Adhemar that all the men are for it, and Cyprienne and Madame de Brionne that all the women are. Madame de Brionne is a widow but would like to see the husbands put back into circulation to give her a wider field.

In the opinion of Madame de Valfontaine the bill is the height of abomination. If people are married for life they become resigned, they make concessions. If they had the hope of a divorce they would carry things beyond all endurance in order to reach a rupture as soon as possible. It would mean the end of the marriage relation. Bafourdin believes that it would encourage marriage if people could get out of it again.

Ad. Why, it suppresses assassination! Nowadays a luckless young gentleman can't forget himself with an unhappy young wife without the whole world shouting to the husband: "Kill them!"

Madame de Brionne [*thoughtlessly*]. Oh! People never tell him that!

Ad. What? Don't they tell him: "Kill him! Kill her? Kill them?"

Mme. de B. [*laughing*]. Oh, I understood you well enough.

Ad. And the murderous fellow shoots—bing, bang! Think of it! Why, it's barbarous! It does not belong to this enlightened age! And why does this massacre have to take place? Because there is no other way to get rid of the wife and her lover. Let him be given the right of divorce!

Clav. And then you would have nothing more to fear!

Ad. There you are! I wouldn't have—— [*Correcting himself.*] There wouldn't be anything more to fear.

Clav. And then all the husband would have to do would be to sling his wife into your arms in order to be avenged!

Ad. There you are! That is——

Clav. Yes, yes. Just so.

Des P. [*apart*]. What an idiot!

Cyprienne holds that if there were such a law the virtuous woman would no longer hesitate to transgress, for the law would automatically make all right. Adhemar instantly declares his intention of telegraphing to a journalistic friend for news of the bill. The women urge him to hurry.

When the guests have gone Cyprienne orders her carriage. Des Prunelles has said that he is going out, but he is not, any more than Cyprienne. He comes back from the vestibule with Clavignac and slips into his study. The mouse-trap is going to be sprung.

Cyprienne comes out of her room cautiously and pulls down a window shade. A moment later Adhemar enters from the garden. The instant the door closes behind him an electric bell breaks out with a shrill, unceasing clamor. Adhemar is stunned, Cyprienne terrified. The door will not open again. A servant enters and another bell begins in a different key.

Cyp. A trap! It's a trap! We are caught! Run, run!

Ad. Yes, but which way?

He runs around in a circle. Cyprienne follows him. As Adhemar approaches the vestibule Des Prunelles emerges from his study and blocks the way. Des Prunelles presses a button and the ringing stops.

Des P. We will have a little conversation later, my young friend. Just now, you were about to go out, were you not?

Ad. Yes, I believe—I also think—I was going—but, which way?

Des P. [*opening the door at the right*]. This way.

Ad. Without music?

Des P. Without music.

Cyprienne drops on the sofa and awaits the crisis.

Des P. Well, then, since Adhemar has been here, will you be so kind as to tell me why you accept visits from him without my knowledge? What is it that gives motive to and justifies such forgetfulness of your entire duty? I am not a very disagreeable husband nor a very troublesome one. I am not brutal, ill-bred, miserly, nor troublesome. I have made your life the most pleasant and the most carefree in the world. I never show temper. I have

simple tastes, I lead a regular life, in fact that's exactly what I married for. I haven't the grace and beauty of a nobleman; but nevertheless my appearance is not without a certain distinction. [*He sits.*] I'm not exactly fiery; but every now and then I have outbursts of amiable tenderness—— In short, Madame, I believe, without flattering myself, that I am placing it within your power to be as happy as a woman can be!

Cyp. [*to herself, with a little bitter laugh*]. Ha, ha!

Des P. I beg your pardon——?

Cyp. That's what I expected from you! Admirable, upon my word! "As happy as a woman can be!" And how do I know that, Monsieur? It is you who say it! But how far does the possibility of a woman's happiness go? Where have I learned it? When? How? With whom?

Des P. But——

Cyp. To put the matter plainly, Monsieur, when you say of me, to your friends, "She's a delightful woman!" you are placing me in the scales against others! You have a comparison in your mind! But what terms of comparison have I to proclaim you a remarkable man?

Des P. I——

Cyp. No! it's unendurable, the self-assurance you men have!—— Oh, you've arranged affairs beautifully to suit yourselves, you men; it's delightful, the world you have made! Delightful—for you!—you are young, you paw the ground, you caper. "Amuse yourself, my dear," says mamma, "it is proper at your time of life!" "Sow your oats, my lad," says papa, "it will be good for your health!" And monsieur prances, curvets about, from the blonde to the brunette, and then to the auburn-haired! And so it goes. Then, when it has got so far that the gallant steed is used up, "Woof! perhaps I'd better get married!" Then they throw some luckless maid into his arms, some little one all of a tremble, utterly innocent, who has always hung to her mother's apron strings, who knows nothing of life but that it is hidden from her, nothing of natural emotions but that they are forbidden her, nothing of love but what she is able to divine. And monsieur tells her, embracing her somewhat tamely with his tired arms: "My, but aren't you lucky to have stumbled on a jolly dog like me!—No one could love a woman more than I love you; no one em-

braces more energetically than I embrace you!" And the unfortunate young creature, who finds the clasp a little slack, says to herself with a sigh: "What! Can it be so?"

For such tame embraces, she thinks, Romeo would not have risked breaking his back by a fall from the fourth story, nor Leander have swum through stormy seas. All is far, far different from the dreams of her convent days. He asks if she can really expect him to disguise himself as a Calabrian brigand and come into her room by the window.

Reports have reached her ears that he has done such things, but he replies that she is talking ancient history. That is just her complaint. He is a veteran. She thinks that a young girl should be allowed to run about like a young man. Then when she was married she would be a faithful wife, no longer having any curiosity to be satisfied.

On this point they cannot come to an agreement, and he asks her to return to the question. What are her intentions with regard to Adhemar? She declares that she was just about to destroy all Adhemar's hopes when her husband made his absurd entry. But absurd or not, she will keep her wedding vow. At the same time, she gives him notice that this loyalty has only a temporary character, for if the divorce bill passes—oh! la, la, la—— So now he is forewarned.

When they have retired to their respective rooms the garden door opens softly a little way. Adhemar pokes his head in. In spite of his recent terror, an inspiration has restored his courage. He has fabricated a telegram announcing the passage of the divorce bill by an overwhelming majority.

Upon seeing the bogus telegram Cyprienne agrees at once to pay a visit to Adhemar's apartments. In order not to start the bell, Adhemar has held the door open, but as soon as he departs the bell begins again.

Des Prunelles rushes in furiously and finds no one there. He sits down at the desk to dash off a challenge to Adhemar when he sees the message on the telegram blank. The ruse does not take him in. After a moment's consideration he writes asking Adhemar to have the goodness to come and have a chat about a very amicable proposition that he wishes to make. He has nipped Adhemar's scheme in the bud just in time to prevent Cyprienne from going to him.

The plan that Des Prunelles has decided upon is to catch Adhemar in his own trap by feigning to want a divorce. Cyprienne is dumbfounded to find him in a tranquil and amiable mood. He takes Adhemar's telegram from his pocket and shows it to her.

Cyp. [*surprised*]. Ah!

Des P. [*gayly*]. Understand me?

Cyp. [*giving a shout of joy*]. Divorce?

Des P. Thrice-blest divorce!

Cyp. [*confused*]. But just a few moments ago you said——

Des P. A few moments ago, my dear little one, I did not dare to hope! But now, since the law has been passed——

Cyp. You will consent?

Des P. With pleasure.

Cyp. [*joyfully*]. And we will have a divorce?

Des P. As soon as you desire!

Cyp. [*embracing him wildly*]. Ah, how sweet you are—oh, how noble—how I love you! [*Loosing her embrace.*] Really, now, are you in earnest? is it true? you are not trying to give me a false joy? we are really going to get a divorce? Will you swear it?

Des P. Whoever retracts is a coward!

Cyp. Oh, you dear boy! What happiness! But how shall we bring it to pass?

Des P. Oh, as to the means, my dear, it is merely a question of choice. We'll talk of that directly. For the present, let us revel in the joy of this separation—so candid!

Cyp. So cordial!

Des. P. So tender!

Cyp. Ah! that's so true. I have never loved you so much. Oh, how I do love you! [*She takes his head in her two hands and kisses him.*]

Des P. [*kissing her in turn*]. Dear little girl! And it's so simple! We no longer find joy in each other's company, therefore we quit each other as good friends; instead of living together, fighting like cats and dogs, fooling each other in a thousand little ways, and making untold misery for one another!

Cyp. [*laughing*]. Oh, yes, indeed. You certainly have caused me a heap of trouble, you rascal!

Des P. [*same play*]. And you have certainly fooled me in a thousand ways! Now, we can just laugh at all that, can't we? No more anger, laughter instead!

Cyp. [*gayly*]. Yes, now it is only funny. Don't you think you have spied on me enough, you big tyrant? Go 'way! [*She pinches his chin.*]

Des P. [*pinches hers*]. Not quite.

Cyp. [*laughing*]. Oh, is that so? How about the electric bell?

Des P. That certainly was a clever dodge, eh, that little buzzer?

He is curious to know if Adhemar is really so bewitching. He is a darling fellow, she assures him, perhaps not a saint, but what would she want of a saint. Besides, in these country towns one hasn't a great deal of choice. One has to be satisfied with the material at hand, it is so lonesome. But he is still more anxious to know if she has not made just the faintest little pin prick in the marriage contract.

Cyp. No! Not one!

Des P. Oh, tootsie, wootsie, come, now.

Cyp. Why, never! I assure you, my dear.

Des P. Not the tiniest little teeny, weeny nickie?

Cyp. Why, no; nothing, honor bright!

He does not seem to realize that people are under continual restraint, she says, everybody spying on one, and no chance to be alone. Finally she admits there has been just a little kiss or two—but he was speaking of serious things. Why is he interested in such trifles now?

Des P. They amuse me!

Cyp. [*gayly moving the armchair down a little*]. Oh, very well, if that's the case, listen; here's the full list: The first kiss was four months ago—on the shoulder, at the Prefecture ball, while he was putting on my cloak!——

Des P. One!

Cyp. The second, last summer—— [*She hesitates.*] But honest, now—won't you be angry?

Des P. Do I look like it?

Cyp. The second, last summer, between two doors, on the arm! he even bit me!

Des P. Two!

Cyp. And the third, eight days ago, on the neck, when we were looking at the little goldfishes!

Des P. And the next?

Cyp. That's all!

Des P. Cyprienne!——

Cyp. Why, if there was anything else, I would tell you—now.

Des P. [*rising*]. Nevertheless I'd be very much interested in seeing——

Cyp. [*same play*]. What?

Des P. Your correspondence.

Cyp. His letters? Do you want to, dear? They are here.

The letters serve to show that she has not deceived him. He likes it better so in spite of the divorce. She throws her arms around his neck and is kissing him when the servant shows in Adhemar. The astounded young man conceives that Des Prunelles asked him to come to witness this scene. The husband greets him cordially.

Des P. And so, my young friend, there is no way to conquer that love of yours? It is a wild passion, a delirium?

Ad. Monsieur!——

Des P. Cyprienne has told me all! [*Showing him the drawer.*] The matches, the button, the kisses on the neck, the shoulder, the arm—Bless my soul, you're a clever wooer, you young devil! It seems you bite, eh?

Ad. [*looking at* CYPRIENNE, *who smiles*]. You know that?

Des P. [*smiling familiarly*]. Well—to put the whole matter in a nutshell—you've got to have my wife, no use talking, eh? You positively must have her?

Ad. [*still astonished*]. But——

Des P. Very well, my dear boy, take her. [*Going toward* CYPRIENNE.] Take her! I hereby cede her to you!

Ad. [*more confused than ever, at left*]. Oh!

Des P. Now will you say I'm not a good fellow?

Cyp. [*gayly*]. He doesn't understand!

Des P. [*to* ADHEMAR]. The divorce law!

Cyp. [*idem.*] We are going to have a divorce!

Des P. And you will marry each other—I'll marry you!

Ad. The divorce law?——

Cyp. Since it has been passed——

Ad. [*forgetting himself*]. Oh, bosh!

Cyp. [*surprised*]. Well! And your telegram?

Des P. Ah! I understand; in spite of that telegram he still had doubts, eh?—you had doubts?

Des Prunelles declares that he has verified the report and found it to be authentic. So he has had a cordial explanation with this dear child here, Cyprienne, and decided that they were mismated. He passes her over. Adhemar mumbles that his hopes did not go so far, but Des Prunelles assures him he is a very lucky dog. Cyprienne will bring him 400,000 francs in her own name, a pretty good catch as Adhemar hasn't a sou.

Adhemar is radiant. The affair suits him to a T. He gratefully calls Des Prunelles his benefactor. Des Prunelles explains that the new law is nothing but a slight modification of the civil code. The requirements have been fulfilled by two years of marriage and the mutual desire to separate. Cyprienne has a copy of the code. Upon consulting it she finds that neither of the parties may contract a new marriage for four years.

Cyp. Hm, well! You see me waiting four years with my arms folded between a husband who's no longer a husband and another who's not yet a husband! You see me!

Des P. No!

Cyp. No! Never in the world!

Des P. Impracticable! We shall have to fall back upon divorce for stated cause.

There is another hitch in this contingency, however, for a culpable party cannot marry his or her accomplice. There is room for further choice between insanity, abandonment, a penitentiary sentence, and cruelty and assault. Rather than wait four years, Cyprienne agrees to submit to a teeny, weeny slap. Still, there will be ten months to wait.

In the meantime, Des Prunelles suggests that they should suppress kissing as dangerous and exciting. Besides, if they abuse this privilege now, what will they do with their evenings later? It is quite to Adhemar's personal interest, furthermore, if personal interest has any

weight with a soul so deeply in love, to act with the greatest possible restraint toward Madame.

It is an unexpected stroke of good fortune for Adhemar to marry twenty thousand francs a year, Des Prunelles reminds him, when one considers his salary of twenty-six hundred. He shouldn't do anything to spoil so charming a state of affairs. Ten months is a long time. Who could guarantee that their passion would not be sated? Then at the moment of marriage one of them might cry out that they had had enough.

Des P. Do you know what I would do if I were in your shoes? I'll tell you. I would accept that place at Arcachon at once, and I would leave this evening; and for some time to come I would stay away from here.

Ad. Ah! Monsieur!

Des P. Well—it would be the part of wisdom! [ADHEMAR *and* CYPRIENNE *regard each other piteously.*] So, consider, weigh matters, it's the counsel of a friend that I'm giving you. And I hope it won't be the last one, either. [*With emotion, putting* CYPRIENNE'S *arm in his.*] When you are married, my dear friends, you will permit me, won't you, to come and see you now and then? You will reserve a little place for me between you, at your fireside?—at your table—Sundays?

Cyp. [*touched*]. Ah, yes, my dear friend!

Ad. [*same play*]. Ah, yes!

Des P. Hey? Good Lord, I could be useful to you occasionally! The advice I could give you, through my experience! [*Tapping* CYPRIENNE'S *hand.*] My profound comprehension of her character! And then your household affairs—I will guide you in the choice of your little economies—if you think of making any. With an income of twenty-two thousand six hundred francs one can't do very much—[*this observation causes a start on the part of* CYPRIENNE]—especially when a person is accustomed, like her, to eat up sixty thousand. [CYPRIENNE *is again struck with the force of the idea.*] But, of course, with care, and with great economy in table expenses, choice of apartments, dress, and horses especially—a great many sacrifices! For while it is a stroke of fortune for you, my friend, for her it will mean a sacrifice! But making a sacrifice for the man a woman loves—that is the

greatest happiness in the world! [*Taking* ADHEMAR'S *arm without letting go of* CYPRIENNE'S.] And I will be able to say, as I look at you: "They are happy! And it is I that have made them so! This, this is my work!" And that is a tender thought; it is a sweet thought, I assure you! Positively, I am getting foolish! the thought touches me! [*To* CYPRIENNE, *taking her in his arms.*] My dear, dear child. [*To* ADHEMAR.] You will permit me?

Ad. Oh, I entreat you; go ahead.

Des P. [*kissing* CYPRIENNE *upon the forehead*]. One cannot have lived so long a time in the greatest possible intimacy with another without there being a certain grief. [*To* CYPRIENNE *arranging a curl upon her forehead.*] You will think of me sometimes, won't you, Madame?

Cyp. [*touched*]. Aren't you going to call me "dear" any more?

Des P. Well—all right, I will. [*To* ADHEMAR.] You will permit me? [*To* CYPRIENNE.] Yes, you will think of me, dear. [*He kisses her, and turning toward* ADHEMAR *says.*] Thanks. [*Leading* CYPRIENNE *over toward* ADHEMAR.] And now, my children, it is right that you be left alone! You will have supper here, won't you, my dear successor?

The prospect of living on twenty thousand francs instead of sixty is beginning to make an impression on Madame. Adhemar, on the other hand, is much relieved to think that there are to be no more plots, no more danger.

Cyp. So that bothered you? That's odd; for my part it was exactly those things that gave the affair charm for me.

Ad. Same here—but I felt considerable remorse at the thought of deceiving that noble-hearted gentleman. [*Points toward door of study where* DES PRUNELLES *now is.*] But now—all is security, calm!

Cyp. A great calm, my dear friend—ah, what a calm!

As her husband-in-waiting, Adhemar sees in Cyprienne only a fiancée, and assures her as such that he honors and respects her. She replies somewhat ruefully that she is a much-respected woman.

Upon taking leave until dinner time, Adhemar calls her his treasure, an expression so apt in view of her four

hundred thousand francs that he has to chuckle, once his back is turned.

Mme. de Brionne has got wind of the telegram announcing the passage of the divorce bill, and has come back to the Des Prunelles to verify the report. She says that a score of women have followed her, but did not have the courage to come in and are waiting at the gate. Des Prunelles hands her the slip and bids her exhibit it to her followers. She waves it from the window and the ladies cheer.

Mme. De Brionne [*turning around*]. All married.

Clav. There are going to be fireworks.

Des Prunelles drags Clavignac aside and thanks him heartily for disseminating the false report so rapidly. It is a blow to Clavignac to learn that the dispatch was forged.

Cyprienne is a little shocked to find that her husband does not intend to dine at home.

Cyp. But you invited Adhemar to dinner!

Des P. With you—not with me!

Cyp. Ah! I understood—it was such a pretty idea, a sort of betrothal dinner, just for us three!

Des P. [*taking another step to get his hat*]. No, my pretty baby. You will like it better dining alone—just you two. My presence would put a damper on the young man's pleasure.

Cyp. Why, on the contrary, you would inject some life into him. Now that he is to marry me, he is congealed—he's a cake of ice.

Des P. [*coming back toward her*]. And, besides, to speak sincerely, I'm glad to have the opportunity to go out and take the air, and to stretch my arms a little on being released from my prison.

Cyp. Now—my whole evening is spoilt! Oh, please stay!

Des P. [*starting to go*]. Honestly, I can't, duckie. Well—good evening! [*He holds out his hand to her across the table.*]

Cyp. [*approaching the table and holding on to his hand*]. But where are you going to eat?

Des P. [*with the air of one who wants to get away*]. At Dagneau's, the Grand Vatel.

Cyp. [*still holding his hand*]. Alone?

Des P. Probably. [*He takes his hand away.*]

Cyp. Oh! you aren't sure?

Des P. Well——!

Cyp. Is some one expecting you?

Des P. No—but I may find some friend.

Cyp. A woman?

Des P. [*laughing*]. Oh!

Cyp. Now confess that you're going to dine with some woman.

Des P. [*laughing*]. I assure you I am not, dear.

Cyp. Henri, don't lie.

Des P. [*laughing again*]. But I'm not lying!

Cyp. You are not frank and open. That isn't loyalty. I told you everything. Now you tell me everything. Who is she? Please tell me who she is.

Des P. [*same play*]. Well, since I don't know her myself.

Cyp. [*approaching him and rumpling his necktie slightly*]. Do you mean to say that you've gone and dressed yourself up like that to dine alone?

Des P. Certainly!

Cyp. You never made yourself so handsome for me!

Des P. Well, upon my word——!

Cyp. [*half angry and seeking to wheedle him*]. Anyway, as things are now, this is very funny—these mysterious goings on—why? [*Taking his arm in a friendly way.*] What difference would it make to me now? We're only good friends; that's all—isn't it? Two comrades—two jolly boys?

Des P. Surely.

Cyp. All right, then——?

Des P. All right, then—what difference does it make to you?

Cyp. Why, I just want to know! It vexes me not to know.

Des P. [*laughing*]. But I repeat there is nobody.

Cyp. [*letting go of his arm*]. You don't seem to be able to say it without laughing.

Des P. I laugh—because it's too funny, this access of posthumous jealousy.

Cyp. But it isn't jealousy; it's curiosity. And that's entirely natural, surely. All women——

Des P. Well, anyway, I can't tell you, my dear.

Cyp. [*hastily*]. Ah, you can't! There you are!

Des P. Because——

Cyp. Because you're afraid it will compromise her?

Des P. No, because——

Cyp. [*without listening*]. Do I know her?

Des P. No more than I.

Cyp. [*hastily*]. But as much! Is it one of my acquaintances?

Des P. Dear, if you——

Cyp. I'll wager it's one of my friends!

Des P. Oh!

Cyp. Oh, that's the way it always is! I'll bet that if I investigate—— [*Suddenly.*] Madame de Brionne!

Des P. Estelle?

Cyp. Estelle!—That's it; you've given yourself away!

Des P. No, I haven't.

Cyp. Oh! "Estelle!" Come, now, doesn't that make it plain?

Des P. But I call her "Estelle" just as you do, my dear.

Cyp. [*moving a little away off from him*]. Oh, yes, like me, nothing! I say "Estelle," short, like that. But you —"Est-e-elle!" You bleat her name! I'll wager my best hat there's something in it!

Des P. But——

Cyp. Oh! anyway, I've had my suspicions about it, don't you ever think——

Des P. Aha!

Cyp. She was always snooping around in my house and I never could endure her, the affected thing, with her giddy airs! An intriguing creature, jealous, envious, deceitful!

Des P. Oh——!

Cyp. [*leaning against the table*]. Oh, naturally you defend her—and she's made up from head to foot! Hair, eyebrows, eyelashes—none of it is her own. Painted, enameled, varnished! She has a smile—goodness, I wonder what she made that with!

Des P. Oh!

Cyp. [*moving away from the table slightly*]. Besides, she gave herself away just now, when she told us that she

wanted the divorce law to pass so that she could have another woman's husband! And only a few minutes ago, here, right under my nose, she was all lighted up with smiles—she actually danced for joy! You kissed her hands—I call that indecent.

Des P. If you'd only let me——

Cyp. Well, so that's your conquest! Really, I can't compliment you on it!

Des P. Come, now, lovey, that's not very good taste on your part. I didn't rip your Adhemar up the back.

Cyp. [*going up left*]. Oh, go ahead and do it! "Estelle!" I can see through a glass window!—"Estelle!"—I believe you're foolish enough to marry her!

Des P. I'd like to call your attention——

Cyp. [*with both hands on the back cushion of the couch*]. Are you going to marry her?

Des P. I haven't said so.

Cyp. But you will! [*With an exclamation of horror.*] Oh!—And you would marry that little devil, who deceived her first husband, who will deceive you as she did him, and who will deceive the third, when you are gone, poisoned to death by her chemical products! [*As she speaks she gradually gets over to the right, behind the table.*]

Des P. You carry things pretty far! [*He sits down on the couch, putting on his gloves.*]

Cyp. [*coming down to the front of the stage, right*]. And so that rouge-pot will take my place here! She will install herself in my house—[*goes up and strikes the armchair*]—among my furniture! She will bespatter me with mud from my own carriages! [*Going toward* DES PRUNELLES, *in front of the table.*] Why, if I knew it was going to be that way—rather than let you do it—I wouldn't accept the divorce!

Des P. And how about Adhemar?

Cyp. [*sinking into the armchair at right of the table*]. Oh, Adhemar!—to think that I am to be cast aside for that wax doll! Oh, heavens! No, no! really, that's too much!

Des P. [*standing*]. I am not casting you aside. We're casting each other aside.

Cyp. [*rising and coming down*]. If it were some one else, I wouldn't care.—But that woman—Oh!

Des P. [*behind her*]. All right, be happy, then—it isn't she!

Cyp. [*turning suddenly round toward him and seizing the lapel of his coat to look at him face to face*]. Then it's some other woman?

Des P. I——

Cyp. Who?

Des P. Since you don't care——

Cyp. I don't care! No, I don't care! But please tell me who?

Des P. Why?

Cyp. Is she young? Pretty?

Des P. Since——

Cyp. Prettier than I?

Des P. But what does it signify to you?

Cyp. [*resolutely and with comic approach to a cry*]. It—bothers me!

Des P. Bosh!

Cyp. Yes, it bothers me, so there—to think that you would go off like that, right away, and run around with some other woman. It's silly, of course I know—but it's too much for me; it worries me!

Des P. [*laughing*]. Still——

Cyp. And besides, you are too merry, you have too happy an air. I have never seen you so joyous.

Des P. [*taking her hands as if to say good-bye. Both in the armchair*]. But there is an excellent reason for that, you silly little kitten. My independence, your serenity of mind, our mutual happiness! I am happy to see you happy, dear—for of course you are happy, aren't you?

Cyp. [*kneeling on the armchair, without certainty*]. Yes.

Des P. Well, then——?

Cyp. [*ready to cry*]. But there's a big fly in my soup!

Des P. How's that?

Cyp. [*sinking into his arms across the armchair and bursting into tears*]. You aren't sorry enough about leaving me!

Des P. Ah!

Cyp. [*still crying*]. No, you aren't a bit kind! You throw me into a corner like an old bouquet. So there, so there! It's humiliating, I won't be thrown away like that!

Des P. [*straining her to his heart and patting her on the*

back]. Well, then, am I to understand that you do not want to be separated from me?

Cyp. [*as before*]. No, but that doesn't prevent me from having certain regrets—I have some regrets, *I* have; but you, not one! Yet we have had some good times together——

Des P. [*as before*]. Occasionally.

Cyp. [*as before*]. Oh, often! It's evident you have forgotten them. I am the only one who remembers!

Des P. [*as before, kissing the hair that hangs over her forehead*]. My big baby girl!

Cyp. [*as before*]. Eat dinner with me just once more. People eat at home on holidays and family festivals. This is a festival. To-morrow you can have supper with the other woman.

Des P. [*as before*]. But there isn't any other woman!

Cyp. [*as before*]. Oh!

If she wants to have it proved to her, he says, she can come and eat supper with him. She accepts quickly. He thinks it such a pretty idea, a divorce dinner. If she likes, he will let her get a little tipsy. She dances about, laughing with joy, and she gets her hat and cloak. She is going to have plenty of time to eat with Adhemar later, so why should she stay at home to entertain him to-night.

They see Adhemar coming through the court and Cyprienne tells the maid to say she has gone out, and to give some excuse. They have hardly left one way when Adhemar comes in the other. He is in evening dress, with a white tie and white gloves, and has a bouquet of white roses.

Josepha [*hastily*]. Monsieur is not at home!

Ad. [*radiant, crossing to the right*]. Monsieur—a pile I care! Where is Madame?

Jos. Madame begs you to excuse her, Monsieur. She has just gone out!

Ad. [*with a start*]. Gone out?

Jos. Yes, Monsieur. Her aunt is very ill.

Ad. [*in consternation*]. What, already? [*Throwing his bouquet on the table.*] Her aunt? Well, we'll find out about this soon enough!—I'm going there—to her aunt's. [*He rushes out.*]

Bastien. Supper is ready, Madame! [*He offers his arm*

GRACE GEORGE AS CYPRIENNE AND FRANK WORTHING AS DES PRUNELLES

Cyp. It's so cute—this idea of a divorce banquet. . . . Let's hurry. He's coming

to JOSEPHA, *who has taken the bouquet on the table, and both enter the dining-room, aping their employers.*]

The small dining-rooms at the Grand Vatel are very conveniently arranged, with a piano, fireplace, closet, sofa, and the sideboard in an antechamber. In the centre of one of these rooms is a table with places laid for two. Des Prunelles and Cyprienne enter.

The convenience of the closet is shown before so very long when Adhemar demands admittance. Cyprienne goes into it, but leaves the door open far enough to overhear everything. Adhemar has been to Cyprienne's aunt's. She was not there. Then he went to Des Prunelles' club, where he was told that that gentleman was at Clavignac's dinner party at the Grand Vatel. It is raining hard, and Adhemar has been drenched going about.

The trouble is, Des Prunelles explains, Adhemar went to the wrong aunt's. He should have gone to Aunt Nicole's, number 92 rue de Paris. She has asthma and is eighty-three years old. It is very far and the storm is ferocious. Before starting off again Adhemar requests confidential information; as between man and man, has Des Prunelles much faith in this aunt story. It looks deucedly like a humbug to Adhemar. His predecessor may be able to enlighten him, if she has ever used this aunt story before.

Des P. Do you mistrust her?

Ad. Well, I've discovered that the woman is pretty artful—I've seen her twist you round her finger——

Des P. Oh——!

Ad. She certainly led you a merry dance!

Des P. Yes, I stood it, but how about you?

Ad. Oh, with me those tricks wouldn't go down at all.

Des P. No! of course not.

Ad. Not by a damn sight! I wouldn't be such an easy mark as you were. [*Putting on his hat with a lordly air.*] She'll have to toe the line with me!

Des P. [*with a sidelong glance at* CYPRIENNE]. That's the way to talk, old sport!

Ad. Where did you say the aunt lived?

Des P. Nicole? Ninety-two rue de Paris.

Ad. [*sitting down on the couch*]. Oh, dash it! [*Turns up*

his trousers. To himself.] If it wasn't for the four hundred thousand francs—— But there you are! [*Rising.*] Well—— I'm off! Thousand pardons—and hope you enjoy the meal! [*He starts toward the rear.*]

Des P. Thanks. [*Calling him back and holding up his umbrella.*] Your umbrella!

Des Prunelles wishes him a pleasant journey. As he remarks to Cyprienne a moment later, the poor fellow is going the devil knows where. It is little she cares how far he trots. She repeats some of his expressions angrily, about her "tricks," "the woman," "humbug," and "she'd have to toe the line with me." In short, he is stupid, that Adhemar!

Des Prunelles reminds her that the young man is only playing his part. He should not be blamed for that. A husband and a lover are two absolutely different things. As the husband, it is Adhemar's turn to be quarrelsome; he is defending himself. To be sure, he is not very skilful. He is younger than his predecessor, and has not seen so much of life.

Des P. To sum the matter up, all husbands can be resolved into a single general type—the husband; and all lovers into a general type—the lover. The husband has all the faults; the lover has all the merits. That's understood. In reality, the husband has only one fault—that of being the husband. And the lover has but one good quality—that of being the lover. [CYPRIENNE *pours out some champagne for herself.*] This is so true that the same man can be at one and the same time the highly tedious husband of his own wife and the highly agreeable lover of some other man's wife. The difference is not in the individual, it is in the function that he performs. [*He pours out champagne for himself.* JOSEPH *enters with a bottle in a wicker basket.*]

Cyp. Then, is it inadvisable to marry?

Des P. Oh, there are just as many disadvantages in not marrying. [*He drinks.*]

Cyp. Well, what?

Des P. You must be reasonable, my dear—I will speak of the matter quite freely, shan't I? seeing that we are going to get a divorce. There is neither wife nor husband here now—just two good friends, two boon companions,

who are having a chat in the café, with their elbows on the table—— [*Both drink at the same time.*] All right, then—don't expect of poor Adhemar what he can't offer you—passion—ecstasy—all that! Content yourself with what he is able to give you, and if he gives it regularly, agreeably, be happy. True felicity does not consist in excesses—heavens, no! A good regular life, a good general average, that's happiness.

Cyp. Yes, if the wife is good—really good!

Des P. She always is with a few mutual concessions.

To illustrate the truth of his remark he tells her of an old custom in Switzerland where, when a couple wanted a divorce, they were locked in a room for a week with a table, one plate, one chair, and one bed. Things to eat were passed in by the window. At the end of the week they were asked how about the divorce.

Cyp. Profound silence! They had eaten each other up!

Des P. No, nothing of the sort! Three times out of five they didn't want a divorce any more.

Cyp. [*laughing*]. Oh, so you think that if we were locked up——

Des P. [*serving*]. Oh, I'm not talking about our case at all. You and I are people of judgment. We know what we are doing. That is understood.

Cyp. [*gayly*]. It wouldn't be so bad here!

Des P. No, generally speaking. What I am eating here is very good.

Cyp. Yes, but peppery.

Des P. Your glass. [*He pours out some of the Chambertin for her and himself.*] And then, during those seven days, we could at least make one another's acquaintance.

Cyp. [*laughing*]. What, acquaintance?

Des P. Yes.

Cyp. [*breaking out into laughter*]. Oh! how silly you are! Why, we've been married for two years!

Des P. And twenty-two days. Twenty-sixth of October. [*They raise their glasses and drink.*]

Cyp. And you think we don't know each other yet?

Des P. Not in the least!

Cyp. Oh!

Des P. [*serving*]. Come, now, won't you admit that you've never seen me in such a good humor?

Cyp. That's true.

Des P. Then you see, don't you, that you don't know me? And how should you know me? During two years we lived in intimacy for only fifteen days!

He figures out the total number of waking hours that they have spent alone together and convinces her that he is right. And a good deal of that time was spent in squabbling and turning their backs to each other.

The waiter coming in with a platter of crawfish and finding Cyprienne in Des Prunelles' lap, advances with caution, puts down the platter discreetly and makes off.

Voices are heard outside. Adhemar has come back and insists upon entering the little dining-room. The waiters are holding him back. Des Prunelles conceals Cyprienne behind a screen. At the same moment Adhemar bursts into the room and rushes forward, fighting off the waiters. Cyprienne is in full view of the audience. She eats some crawfish and then dips her fingers in the finger bowl.

Des P. [*napkin in hand*]. Well, well, what's the meaning of this?

Ad. [*extremely hoarse*]. Monsieur—words fail me——

Des P. Yes, it's annoying——!

Ad. To characterize your conduct! I have just come from Aunt Nicole's——

Des P. Ah! how is she?

Ad. How is she? She is no more! [*With a quick movement he throws his umbrella under his left arm and wets* DES PRUNELLES, JOSEPH, *and the under-waiters, who wipe themselves off with their napkins.*]

Des P. Indeed!

Ad. Dead three months ago!

Des P. Ah! I didn't know it—— Such a distant aunt—— [*He makes a sign to* JOSEPH *and the waiters to retire.*]

Ad. [*opening his umbrella and leaving it at left to dry*]. Three miles, going and coming! And no carriage——! And no Cyprienne! I returned to your house with all speed, to see if she hadn't come back. And all I found there was your Josepha and your Bastien, who were eating your dinner and drinking your Pomard! It works speedily,

your Pomard! When they saw me, those blackguards were wallowing in booze—especially the maid! "Looking for Madame? Oh! well, if you're running after Madame, you're a fine jackass!"

Des P. Phew!

Ad. "Jackass!" That word was an eye-opener! I rushed back to the Grand Vatel. I spoke to the woman downstairs, at the foot of the staircase, the one that opens the oysters. She knows me quite well. I said: "Did you see Monsieur Des Prunelles when he came in?" "Yes, Monsieur." "Was there a lady with him?" "Yes." "Describe her," I said. "Small, plump, a regular quail." [*Uttering a savage cry.*] Ah! "Jackass" is explained! I have been jobbed! You are eating here together, you and she! This is disloyal, you turned her over to me; and you are treading our agreement under foot!

Des P. [*stammering a little and slightly "under the influence"*]. My dear successor—consider a minute! If she were here——!

Ad. Behind the screen!

[CYPRIENNE *gives vent to a little laugh.*]

Des P. Why, if she were here, she would now be in your arms!

Ad. Oh! a man never knows. Women are like weather vanes. Perhaps she now thinks it amusing to deceive me with your assistance.

Cyp. [*uttering a little involuntary cry of protestation*]. Oh——!

Ad. That cry! She's here! [*He rushes toward the screen.*]

Des P. [*grabbing him by the tail of his overcoat and making him pirouette*]. Beg pardon, that's one of my lady friends.

Ad. Exhibit her!

Des P. It's not the proper thing.

Adhemar wants to hear the lady's voice, but Des Prunelles will not permit that either. At last he asks if Adhemar would know Cyprienne's foot. She sticks the toe of her shoe under the screen. Adhemar declares it is not Cyprienne's foot at all. He is ashamed of himself, he begs Des Prunelles' pardon and goes. Cyprienne comes out from behind the screen and sits on the couch. She asks if it is permissible for any one to be so stupid.

Des P. The fact stares you in the face.

Cyp. Hm! do you think that it will be a pleasure to deceive that fellow?

Des P. [*going toward her*]. Certainly—some day!

Cyp. Some day! Hm, right off!

She turns to the piano and sings a snatch of an old song:

"'Twas hardly worth the botherment
To go and change the government."*

Ad. [*without*]. You are inside there, Madame! I have recognized your voice! but I shall have my revenge! Tremble! tremble! Vengeance approaches!

Des P. Vengeance?

Waiters [*dragging* ADHEMAR *away*]. Quick, quick! let's get him out of here!

Ad. But it's my wife!

The Voices. To the station-house with him! [THE VOICES *are lost in the distance.*]

Cyprienne looks out of the window and sees Adhemar dragged across the street. In jumping down from a chair she splashes Des Prunelles with wine, and he takes off his coat and puts it in front of the fire. She now declares she was insane to think she liked *that* man. She insists upon her husband falling at her feet and asking her forgiveness for casting her into the arms of such an idiot.

Des P. [*on his knees, thunderstruck*]. But——

Cyp. Why, he is odious, do you understand? He is ridiculous, he is ugly, he is stupid, your Adhemar! Why, I hate him, I want you to know! And I don't love anybody but you! Tell me that you love me still, more and more, forever! Say it quick!

Des P. I——

Cyp. And that you repent having thrown me off! And that you will never leave me again! Never! never! never!

Des P. Never! I——

Cyp. That's enough! you are repentant! I will forget everything! I forgive you! Come to my arms! I adore you!

[*Three knocks are heard at the door.*]

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*C'n' etait pas la peine assuremént
De changer de gouvernement.

A Voice. Open, in the name of the law!

Cyprienne hides behind the screen. Adhemar has come back with the policemen. He has had the hardihood to claim that Cyprienne is his wife and to demand the help of the police in recovering her. Even when she comes out from her retreat, looking somewhat tousled, and identifies her real husband, the police will not believe her. They have never seen such barefaced impudence.

Cyprienne and Des Prunelles rush into each other's arms, only to be dragged apart by the scandalized officers. Profiting by the open door, Des Prunelles makes a dash for liberty. Under cover of this diversion Cyprienne gives Adhemar a violent slap and goes into the closet. Des Prunelles is quickly surrounded and is brought back. He is pushed into the closet and locked up. Then a search is started for the lady.

Adhemar forgets himself when the closet door is opened, and exclaims "With his wife!" Immediately he is taken into custody and the officers shower their apologies upon Des Prunelles, begging him most encouragingly to go on enjoying himself. Des Prunelles and his wife go out gayly between the policemen and waiters, who salute them respectfully, while Adhemar nurses his cheek.

THE CULT OF BOREDOM*

By Edouard Pailleron

First played in Paris at the Comédie Française on April 25, 1881.

Argument: The Countess de Céran wishes her son Roger to marry Lucy Watson, an English girl of wealthy family, but Roger's great aunt, the Duchess de Réville, wishes him to marry Suzanne de Villiers, a poor orphan. The Countess finds a note in a disguised hand, not Roger's, arranging a clandestine rendezvous with one of the young ladies, and she and the Duchess lie in wait for the lovers. What do they discover, and whom will Roger marry?

Madame de Céran's salon is one of the three or four most powerful centres of influence, both literary and political, in Paris, and it is with high hopes of preferment that Paul Raymond, a sub-prefect of Agenis, goes with his wife, Jeanne, to visit at her château at Saint-Germain. He cautions Jeanne against any levity of deportment. One must not laugh in the countess's château, he tells her.

Paul. We are not here to amuse ourselves. We come here sub-prefect, we must depart prefect. Everything depends on her, on us, on you.

Jeanne. On me? How on me?

Paul. Certainly. The world judges a man by his wife. And it is right. That is why you must be on your guard. Assume gravity without hauteur, a smile replete with meaning. Keep your eyes open, listen much, speak little. Oh! Compliments, of course, as many as you like, and quotations also, that has a good effect, but let them be short and pithy; in philosophy, Hegel; in literature, Jean-Paul; in politics——

*Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie.

Jeanne. I don't talk politics.

Paul. All the women talk politics here.

Jeanne. I don't know the first thing about it.

Paul. No more do they. That makes no difference. Go ahead. Cite Pufendorf and Machiavelli as if they were your relations, and allude to the Council of Trent as if you had presided at it. As for diversion: chamber music, a turn in the garden and whist. That is all I can allow you. Besides that, high-necked gowns, and the few words of Latin I have told you, and I insist that before eight days are out they will be saying of you: "Ah, that little Madame Raymond will be the wife of a minister." And in this set when one says that a woman is the wife of a minister, her husband is pretty near being one.

Jeanne. What, you want to be a minister?

Paul. Certainly. Not to be an exception.

It is in this very drawing-room, Paul assures her, that reputations, situations, and elections are made and unmade, and that the designing thrust themselves forward. Here is the back door to ministries, the antechamber of the academies, the laboratory of success. It is a circle in which people talk and pose, in which pedantry takes the place of science, sentimentality of sentiment, and affectation of delicacy; where one never says what one thinks; where attentiveness is politic, friendship calculating, and gallantry only a means; it is the circle where one swallows one's cane in the antechamber and one's tongue in the drawing-room, serious society in short.

Jeanne. But it's the society where one is bored.

Paul. Precisely. A Frenchman has a horror of boredom which amounts almost to veneration. For him boredom is a terrible god whose religion is decorum. He understands serious things only in this guise. This light-hearted nation despise themselves for being so. They have lost faith in their ancient laughter; this sceptical and chattering race believe in silence; they allow themselves to be imposed upon by the deadly pedantry and empty pretentiousness of the pontiffs with white neckties, in politics, in science as well, in art as well, in literature as well, in everything as well. They rail at them, hate them, and flee them like the plague, but they alone possess their secret admiration and absolute confidence.

The idea of going for eight days without talking, without laughing, and without kissing her husband is dreadful to Jeanne, but Paul says he will give her rendezvous as he did at her father's house before they were married. She sits at a piano and begins to play an air from a light opera. In dismay he tries to stop her before anybody can hear it, but at that moment some one enters the room. Jeanne changes the air to a symphony of Beethoven's. The newcomer is a servant, and Paul questions him about the company

Roger de Céran, who has been absent on a scientific expedition in the Orient, returns home that very day, and Professor Bellac, having finished his course at the Sorbonne, is expected for a visit. Those already in the house besides Madame de Céran and her aunt, the Duchess de Réville, include Miss Lucy Watson, an English girl; Monsieur and Madame Saint-Réault, Madame de Loudan, Madame de Arriégo, and Suzanne de Villiers, a second cousin of Roger.

Paul informs Jeanne that Suzanne is a giddy little cut-up of eighteen, who ran away twice from the convent where she was sent after the death of her parents. He says she is quite out of place in the house and that she is detested by Madame de Céran, but that the Duchess, whose desires receive special consideration on account of the large fortune that she has to leave, brought the girl there and is simply crazy about her.

Jeanne makes a most favorable impression on Madame de Céran by citing a few words from the philosophers, and the Countess thinks that Jeanne will appreciate the program for the evening's entertainment. Monsieur de Saint-Réault is to read from his unpublished work on the Rama-Ravana and the Sanscrit legends, Professor Bellac will give a short talk, and finally a young and unknown poet will read a tragedy which has just been accepted by the Théâtre Français. Jeanne feigns great delight at the prospects.

Saint-Réault has spoken to Madame de Céran of his wish to succeed M. Revel as head of the Jeune École. She did not know that the position was likely to be vacant, but from an evening paper she learns that Revel is very ill. She decides that the position is the very one for her son.

Fortunately, M. Toulonnier, the secretary of a minister, is coming to dinner. She foresees that Roger will be in the Institute at thirty and in the Chamber of Deputies at thirty-five.

The Duchess thinks that Roger's happiness as well as his career should be considered. She objects to Lucy Watson, whom Madame de Céran has picked out for her son, although wealthy and of good family, on the ground that she is a pedant, wears spectacles, corresponds with learned men, and has a scrawny neck. Besides, she declares, Bellac is in love with Lucy and Lucy with Bellac. The Duchess makes no secret of having brought Suzanne there and had Roger act as her tutor so that he would marry her.

Mme. de Céran replies that she will never give her consent. She regards Suzanne as being of disquieting origin, disquieting ways, uneducated, awkward, and without fortune or birth. She says the Duchess is on the wrong track, because Suzanne is in love with Bellac, and has betrayed it lately by a change in her character, singing, laughing, blushing, blanching, and weeping. The Duchess returns that Suzanne is bored.

Duchess. There is only one thing that never bores us women, and that is loving and being loved. And the older I grow the more clearly I see that there is no other happiness in the world.

Mme. de Céran. There are more serious things, Duchess.

Duch. More serious than love! What nonsense! That is to say that when love escapes us we create other interests. When one is old one has false happiness just as one has false teeth, but there is only one true happiness. Only one! It is love! It is love, I tell you!

Mme. de C. You are romantic, aunt.

Duch. It is my age, my niece. Women are romantic twice, at sixteen for themselves and at sixty for others. . . . You say that Suzanne loves Bellac. I say it is Lucy. Let Roger judge. It will wake him up a little. He needs it.

When Roger arrives he kisses his mother's hand and says he is very happy to see her. The Duchess makes him kiss her on the cheek. He has already been in Paris a day before coming out to see them, but explains that he went

to see the minister, and shows them the ribbon of the Legion of Honor which he has received. The minister sent his respects to Mme. de Céran, and hopes that she will think of him when a certain law is before the Senate.

The Duchess tells Roger that while he has been away Suzanne has grown up, and that she is smitten with this fascinating Professor Bellac whom all the ladies admire so much. What Mme. de Céran maintains about the matter is that Suzanne is striving openly to get into the good graces of a man who is too serious to marry her, but who is enough of a coxcomb to amuse himself with her. The affair has only amounted to impropriety so far, she says, and she will take care that it does not become a scandal.

Suzanne comes in. She creeps up behind Roger as stealthily as a cat and puts her hand over his eyes.

Suzanne. Coocoo!

Roger [*getting up*]. Hey?

Suz. [*coming in front of him*]. Ah, here she is.

Rog. [*surprised*]. But, mademoiselle . . .

Suz. Wretch! Don't you recognize your daughter?

Rog. Suzanne!

Duch. [*aside*]. He's blushing.

Suz. Well, aren't you going to kiss me?

Mme. de C. Suzanne, come, it isn't seemly.

Suz. To kiss one's father? Really! [*Goes up to him.*]

Duch. [*to* ROGER]. Kiss her, come, now! [*They kiss.*]

Suzanne tells them that she was at Bellac's lecture when she learned from Mme. de Saint-Réault that Roger had arrived, and she left at once to come and greet him. She lavishes praises on Bellac. All through the lecture, she says, the ladies were exclaiming, "Charming! Charming!" and Mme. de Loudan constantly uttered little squeaks like an India pig. Mme. de Céran and the Duchess go out, and Suzanne tells Roger she is so glad to see him because she loves him so much, adores him. He replies that she must get over the habit of using words which she does not know the meaning of.

Suz. Oh, what makes you look so funny? Because you like me better than Lucy?

Rog. Suzanne!

Suz. That's it! Aren't you going to marry her?

Rog. Suzanne!

Suz. They told me you were.

Rog. Nonsense! Nonsense!

She asks why he wrote to Lucy oftener than to her, and although he says it was about scientific matters she leans on his shoulder for a moment and sheds a few tears. Then she tells him how hard she has worked during his absence, and assures him she has become quite learned. She coaxes him to pet her as he used to, and tries to give him a kiss.

Rog. Suzanne, no more of that!

Suz. Why?

Rog. There, that will do. Be reasonable.

Suz. I've been reasonable enough for to-day. [*Rumples his hair.*]

Rog. Stop it! Such a big girl!

Suz. [*jealously*]. Oh, if it was Lucy.

Rog. There, run along now.

Laughing at him, she sits on his knees and kisses him.

Rog. Suzanne, once more!——

Suz. Yes, once more. [*Kisses him.*]

Rog. [*pushing her away and getting up*]. This is intolerable!

Suz. I'm a tease, am I? Well, I'll go and get my notebooks. That will smooth things over.

Bellac enters with his bodyguard of admiring ladies. Suzanne, in arranging some papers on the table before placing her notebooks on them, finds a piece of pink notepaper, and at the same time she overhears a servant telling Lucy that he has not been able to find the note that she told him to look for. Suzanne hides the note behind her, and Lucy goes out into the garden with Bellac and the other ladies. The note says: "I shall arrive Thursday. Ten o'clock in the evening, in the conservatory. Have a headache." She does not understand why Roger slanted the writing back and did not sign the note.

Roger has watched Suzanne reading the note furtively, and when he gets a chance to take it from a place where she conceals it he reads it and shows it to the Duchess. He thinks that Bellac has made considerable progress with Suzanne. Suzanne comes back to the room with a scarf for which the Duchess sent her, and going up to Roger she takes her notebooks away from him, tears them up, throws them on the floor and goes out angrily.

Toulonnier is a little late, but at last he appears and is presented to the company. Roger comes in abruptly and reports to the Duchess privately that he has just heard the sound of a kiss in the hall. Paul and Jeanne slip into the room.

Duch. [*jumping*]. Of a——

Rog. Oh, yes, I heard it!

Duch. But who?

Mme. de C. [*presenting* RAYMOND *to* TOULONNIER]. Monsieur Paul Raymond, sub-prefect of Agenis.

Suzanne enters wearing a décolleté gown.

Rog. [*to the* DUCHESS]. Look! Décolleté! Frightful!

Duch. I don't think so. [*Aside.*] She's been crying.

As Roger approaches Suzanne dinner is announced, and she goes to Bellac, who is talking with Lucy, and takes his arm. The Duchess tells Paul to sit by her, and says they will talk ill of the government. He reminds her reproachfully that he is an official, but says he may listen to her.

After dinner Saint-Réault gives his lecture on the sacred writings of the Hindus, and concludes with a more than broad hint that he is better qualified than any one else to succeed M. Revel as head of the Jeune École. It is very noticeable that Suzanne asks Bellac in a loud tone to come out into the conservatory. He complies, although reluctant to leave Lucy. Toulonnier congratulates Saint-Réault on his speech, and assures him that the allusion to his candidacy was unnecessary, for "they are all with him." Mme. de Céran approaches Toulonnier in behalf of her son. He assures her that he will not forget his promise, and that "they are all for him." Paul and Jeanne come in from the conservatory, and a moment later the Duchess and Roger enter from the same direction.

Rog. [*agitated*]. Well! You have heard now?

Duch. Yes, but I haven't seen.

Rog. It was really a kiss that time.

Duch. And a hearty one. Who can be kissing so around here?

Rog. Who? Who?

Roger is too disturbed to give his attention to a report that he must prepare.

The poet's appearance is a disappointment to the ladies.

He is gray, bald, and awkward. "No talent!" is Mme. de Loudan's comment. "He's too homely." They are extremely anxious to have Bellac say a few words before the evening is sacrificed to the tragic muse, and press about him with much flutter and importunity. Bellac protests that it is neither the time nor place to plumb the depths of those profound problems which fascinate souls of lofty flight, those mysterious enigmas of this life and the hereafter.

Ladies. Ah! The hereafter, my dear! the hereafter!

Bellac. But with this reservation, I am at your orders. And wait, at this very moment the thought occurs to me that there is one of those questions eternally agitated and never resolved as to which I would beg your leave to declare my position in two words.

Ladies. Yes, yes, speak!

Bel. It concerns love.

Ladies. Ah! Ah!

Bel. Of love! The weakness which is a force—the sentiment which is a faith, the only one perhaps which has no atheist.

Ladies. Ah! Ah! Charming!

Mme. de Loudan [*to the* BARONESS]. His wings, my dear . . . There they are!

Bel. I was brought this morning to speak, in regard to German literature, of a certain philosophy which makes instinct the basis and ruler of all our actions and all our thoughts.

Ladies [*protesting*]. Oh! Oh!

Bel. Well, I seize this occasion to declare boldly that this opinion is not mine, and that I repel it with the whole force of a soul proud of being one.

Ladies. Good! That's right!

Baroness [*low to* MME. DE LOUDAN]. What a beautiful hand he has!

Bel. No, ladies, no! Love is not what the German philosopher said, a purely specific passion, a beguiling illusion with which nature dazzles man in order to gain its ends. No, a hundred times no, if we have a soul!

Ladies. Yes, yes!

Suz. Bravo!

Duch. [*to* ROGER]. She's doing it on purpose, of course.

Bel. Leave to the sophists and vulgarians these theories

which debase the heart; do not discuss them even; reply to them by silence, the language of oblivion.

Ladies. Charming!

Bel. God forbid that I should go so far as to deny the influence of beauty on the faltering will of man. [*Looking around.*] I see before me that with which to refute myself triumphantly.

Ladies. Ah! Ah!

Rog. [*to the* DUCHESS]. He looked at her!

Duch. Yes.

Having assured his hearers of what love is not, the professor borrows a few flights of fancy from the poets to illustrate what it is, citing the experiences of a number of legendary persons to bear him out. He attains the warmest approbation upon assuring his hearers that many an unknown Beatrice exists in the legion of those who cherish chaste and secret love. After taking another shot at materialism, he informs the ladies that all this which he has been saying is what must be taught to the young people whom Revel has heretofore instructed, by whoever is chosen to instruct them after him. And seeing that Saint-Réault is at some distance, engaged in earnest conversation with Toulonnier, Bellac adds that with all due respect to his colleague, Revel's successor must have more than mere scholarly attainments to recommend him, that he must have the irresistible power of a voice that is still young and of an ardor that is not extinct.

The ladies crowd round Bellac again with praises. Suzanne says he is warm and gives him her handkerchief. The ladies run for glasses of water to offer him. Suzanne insists upon his taking hers. The reading of the tragedy is now called in a larger drawing-room, and the company pass out. Bellac asks Toulonnier if he may hope for Revel's place. The Secretary General assures him, taking his hand, that the place belongs to him by rights. He says "they are all for him."

The Duchess and Roger remain behind with Mme. de Céran, whom they inform regarding the note which Suzanne had, making an appointment for 10 o'clock in the greenhouse, and suggesting that she should have a headache. The Duchess intends to be in the greenhouse and to learn how far things have gone. Roger, who is still less

able to apply his mind to his work, says that he will be in the greenhouse, too, and that he will box this rascal's ears before everybody if he has dared to forget how he should conduct himself.

At five minutes of ten the door from the other salon is opened softly and Jeanne enters. She stops abashed upon seeing who is in the room. She protests that she really likes the tragedy very much, and stammers a quotation which she is unable to finish. Then she says she does not feel very well, that she has a headache in fact. Mme. de Céran, the Duchess, and Roger rise and say with one voice, "a headache?" Startled, she asks what is the matter.

Duch. [*after a pause*]. It doesn't surprise me. It's in the air.

Jeanne. Ah, you have one, too?

Duch. I! Oh, not at my age. You have one, well, you must do something for it, my child.

Jeanne. Yes, I am going to walk a little. You will pardon me, won't you?

Duch. Go along. Go along.

[JEANNE *goes out the door leading to the garden.*

A moment later the door from the other salon opens again and Lucy appears. She hesitates and then proceeds on her way. Ten o'clock strikes. The Duchess inquires if Lucy is tired of the reading. She replies that she wishes to take the air, having a headache, and goes out composedly into the garden. The Duchess thinks this is beginning to look curious. She is willing to wager that Lucy will not come back.

For a third time the door from the other salon opens, more brusquely this time, and Suzanne enters precipitately as if she were pursuing some one. Mme. de Céran tells her to stop, and asks why she has left the reading. Suzanne answers that it bores her.

Roger. Is that really the reason?

Suz. I went out because Lucy went out, if you must have another.

Mme. de C. Miss Watson, mademoiselle . . .

Suz. Oh, that's understood! She is perfection! The ideal, the rare bird, Miss Watson! She can do everything, while I. . . .

Mme. de Céran says that Suzanne runs about the streets

alone, dresses extravagantly, and monopolizes Bellac. To each count of this indictment Suzanne's reply is "like Lucy."

Mme. de C. But secretly, you understand me perfectly.

Suz. Oh, as for secrets, there's no need for people to speak to each other . . . they write—[*looking at* ROGER, *and in a small voice*]—disguising their writing.

Mme. de C. What's that?

The Duchess warns Roger with a look not to speak.

Suz. Well, Lucy speaks to whom she likes; Lucy goes out when she likes; Lucy dresses as she likes. I want to do as Lucy does, since she is loved so much.

Mme. de C. And do you know why she is loved? It's because, in spite of the independence of her ways, due to her nationality, she is reserved, serious, learned . . .

Suz. Well, and I? I haven't been all that, not I? Yes, for six months, until to-day, until this evening, I've worked for five hours, kept myself dignified, and I studied as much as she, and I know as much about the subjective and the objective as she, and all that! Well, what good has that done me? Do people love me any better? Am I not always treated like a little girl? Everybody, yes, everybody! [*She looks at* ROGER *out of the corner of her eye.*] Who pays any attention to me even? Suzanne, oh, Suzanne! What does she amount to, she, Suzanne? And all because I'm not an English old maid!

Rog. Suzanne!

Suz. Yes, defend yourself! I know very well what one has to be like to please you. Here! [*Taking the* DUCHESS'S *glasses and putting them on her nose.*] Esthetic! Schopenhauer! The ego! The non-ego! Et cetera! Na, na, na!

Mme. de C. Spare us your monkeyshines, young lady!

Suz. [*with a low bow*]. Thank you, cousin!

Mme. de C. Yes, your monkeyshines, and the foolish things you do.

Suz. As I'm only a little girl it's not surprising that I do foolish things. [*With more spirit.*] Yes, I do foolish things, I do them on purpose, and I am going to do still more!

Mme. de C. Not at my house, I promise you.

Suz. Yes, I went out with Monsieur Bellac! Yes, I

talked in a low voice with Monsieur Bellac! Yes, I have a secret with Monsieur Bellac!

Rog. You dare!

Suz. And he is more learned than you! And he is better than you! And I love him more than you! Yes, I love him! There! I love him!

Mme. de C. I wish to believe that you do not know the gravity . . .

Suz. Yes, yes, I know the gravity, yes!

Mme. de C. Then listen to me! Before committing the new folly with which you threaten us, consider well. There will be gossip and headshakings and scandal, which you can afford less than any one, Mademoiselle de Villiers!

Duch. Oh, take care!

Mme. de C. Well, Duchess, it's necessary at least that she should know . . .

Duch. What!

Suz. [*throwing herself into her arms and weeping*]. Oh, aunt! Aunt!

The Duchess soothes her, and Suzanne says she has known there was something against her, that people stop speaking when she comes into a room, and that they call her "poor little one" when they kiss her. The Duchess dries her eyes.

Duch. There, my pet. There, don't cry.

Suz. And at the convent I saw that I wasn't like the others. Of course I did! Oh, yes, I saw it. They were always talking to me about . . . my father and mother . . . why? Because I hadn't them any more. What have I done that I should not be like every one, that everything that I do is wrong? Is it my fault?

Duch. [*kissing her*]. No, darling, no, my pet!

Mme. de C. I regret . . .

Suz. [*sobbing*]. Well, then, why do they blame me if it isn't my fault? But I'm a burden to every one here. I know it very well. I don't want to stay. I want to go away. Nobody loves me here, nobody!

Rog. [*greatly agitated*]. Why do you say that, Suzanne? It isn't so. Everybody here, on the contrary . . . and I . . .

Suz. [*rising, furious*]. You!

Rog. Yes, I. And I swear to you . . .

Suz. You? Oh, stop! Leave me alone! I detest you! I don't want to see you again, ever! Do you hear? [*She goes toward the garden door.*]

Rog. But Suzanne, Suzanne, where are you going?

Suz. Where am I going? I'm going to walk. And, moreover, I'm going where I like.

Rog. Why now? Why are you going out?

Suz. Why? [*She comes toward him.*] Why? [*Looking him in the eyes.*] I have a headache!!! [*All rise,* SUZANNE *goes out by the door to the garden.*]

Roger thinks that even the Duchess must admit it is clear enough now. Mme. de Céran says that if it is true she will send her away, and Roger declares that he will kill Bellac. The Duchess says she will marry them. There is a loud sound of applause from the large salon, the noise of chairs being moved and the buzz of conversation. It means that the poet has finished reading his first act. They go out quickly, and a moment later the door into the other room is opened, revealing the guests standing in groups, and Paul slips out quietly, making for the garden door.

One end of the conservatory is furnished like a drawing-room. Beyond are clumps of shrubbery and clusters of plants behind which a number of persons might glide and conceal themselves. The Duchess comes in with Mme. de Céran, and, having assured herself they are alone, stops the fountain in order to hear better and turns down the gas so that they may see better, for the less they are seen, she says, the better they may see. Mme. de Céran is surprised that Bellac should be concerned in this rendezvous, and the Duchess that Suzanne should be. though she says they will discover whether she is. Hearing voices they go behind a cluster of large plants, whence, says the Duchess, they will emerge like fairies at the right moment.

Duch. Has some one come in?

Mme. de C. [*looking through the branches*]. Yes.

Duch. Which?

Mme. de C. It's she.

Duch. Suzanne?

Mme. de C. Yes. [*Astonished.*] No!

Duch. What, not she?

Mme. de C. No! Not décolleté. Some one else.

Jeanne's voice is heard calling "Paul." She comes forward and Paul follows her, after having stopped to put a piece of wood in the hinge of the door so that it will make a noise if it is opened. One mystery is dispelled at once when they speak of having kissed in the corridor and in the garden. Paul rails at the house, the guests, the tragedy, that "frozen" Lucy, "wooden" Roger, and "Bellac of the ladies." The Duchess is the only one, he says, who has common sense. Madame de Céran is very indignant, but the Duchess finds Paul amusing.

Jeanne has to laugh to think of Paul discussing politics solemnly with the senator, and he at the idea of her quotations and feigned quotations from the philosophers. Jeanne has no remorse on that score, so great is her ire against her hostess for having put her and Paul at opposite ends of the house.

Mme. de C. [*rising*]. I shall ask her to leave.

Duch. Keep quiet.

Jeanne. What a wicked thing to do! It was! It was! I'm sure. . . . A woman must know, mustn't she, that newly married people . . . always have things to say to each other.

Paul [*tenderly*]. Yes, always.

Jeanne. Always, naturally? It's always so?

Paul. What a sweet voice you have! I was listening to it a while ago while discussing the treaties of 1815, delicate, sweet, enveloping. It is the music of the heart, as de Tocqueville says.

Jeanne. Ah! Paul, you mustn't laugh at serious things.

Paul says he is so happy that he does not mind not being prefect. The Duchess has to restrain Mme. de Céran when Paul begins to kiss Jeanne's hands, murmuring one sweet inanity after another. Suddenly the door creaks. Jeanne and Paul spring up in alarm and slip out at the rear. Mme. de Céran thinks it was a good thing that they were interrupted, but the Duchess regrets it, for now, she says, she is done with laughing. It is Bellac who has entered.

Mme. de C. The other isn't far off. You shall see.

Duch. Oh, it's only the imprudence of a schoolgirl.

[*The door creaks.*] Here she is! Oh, dear, my heart is thumping. In these things one tries in vain to make sure. One is never certain. Do you see her?

Mme. de C. Yes, it's she, and in a moment Roger, who has been watching her, will come in, too. Shan't we show ourselves, Duchess?

Duch. No, not now. I want to know how far it has gone. I am resolved to know what to think about it.

Mme. de C. This uncertainty will finish me. . . . Décolleté! . . . It's she! It's really she!

Duch. Oh! The little rascal! Let me see.

They peer through the foliage for a moment, and then discover that it is Lucy. While she and Bellac are groping about trying to find each other, Paul comes back with Jeanne at the rear, unperceived by the Duchess and Mme. de Céran, and conceal themselves behind shrubbery at the other end of the conservatory so that the professor and the English girl are between two pairs of onlookers.

Lucy tells Bellac that he might have given her his arm and walked out with her instead of going to the trouble of writing an unsigned note in a disguised hand, but he tells her that in France such things cannot be done, and that since she lost the note it was just as well that there was nothing to show who wrote it. He has brought the proofs of his book, tied with pink ribbon, to give to her so that she shall see it first of all. There is only one point in it upon which they are not agreed. Sinking his voice to a tender pitch, he inquires if it is really true that she does not believe in Platonic love.

Lucy. No, I do not in the least.

Bellac [*gracefully*]. Well . . . how about us?

Lucy [*simply*]. With us it is friendship.

Bel. Pardon me! It is more than friendship and better than love!

Lucy. Then if it is more than one and better than the other, it is neither one nor the other. And now, thank you again, a thousand times, but let us go back. Shall we not? [*She starts to go.*]

Bel. [*holding her back*]. Wait!

Lucy. No! No! Let us go back.

Paul [*to* JEANNE]. She isn't going to bite.

Bel. [*holding her*]. But do wait, please! Two words!

. . . Two words! Enlighten me, or enlighten yourself. The question is worth the trouble. Come, Lucy.

Lucy [*becoming animated*]. Come, Bellac! Come, my friend, your Platonic love cannot be sustained philosophically.

Bel. Permit me. This love is a friendship . . .

Lucy. If it is friendship it is not love!

Bel. But the concept is double!

Lucy. If it is double it is not one.

The Duchess has often heard love discussed, but never with the metaphysical phrases that Bellac begins to employ.

Bel. Take this for an example, Lucy. Suppose two given persons, two abstractions, two entities, a given man and a given woman, both in love, but with the vulgar physical love. Do you understand me?

Lucy. Perfectly.

Bel. Suppose them to be in a situation like this, alone, at night, together. What is going to happen?

Duch. [*to* MME. DE CÉRAN]. I'm doubtful about this.

Bel. It is inevitable—follow me closely—it is inevitable that a phenomenon which I am going to show you will be produced.

Jeanne [*to* PAUL]. Oh, this *is* amusing!

Paul. Well, rather!

Bel. Both of them, or more probably one of them first, the man . . .

Paul [*to* JEANNE]. The male entity.

Bel. Will approach her whom he thinks he loves. [*He approaches her.*]

Lucy [*recoiling a little*]. But . . .

Bel. [*restraining her gently*]. No, no! You shall see! They look into the depths of each other's eyes. Their breath mingles, and their hair . . .

Lucy. But Monsieur Bellac . . .

Bel. And then . . . And then . . . there takes place in their beings, independently of their egos themselves, an uninterrupted series of unwitting acts, which, by a sort of progression, of *processus*, slow but ineluctable, will inevitably bring them to the foreseen conclusion, when neither the will, nor the intelligence, nor the soul will count for anything.

Lucy. One moment. This processus . . .

Bel. Wait, wait! Let us now suppose another couple and another love. Instead of physical love, psychological love—two exceptions—do you follow me?

Jeanne. Yes.

Paul. They also, sitting near each other, draw closer.

Lucy [*moving farther away*]. But that's the same thing!

Bel. [*still restraining her*]. But wait! There is a distinction. Let me make you see the distinction. They also may look into the depths of each other's eyes, and mingle their hair . . .

Lucy. But what then? [*Getting up.*]

Bel. [*making her sit down*]. Just this! Just this! It is not each other's beauty that they contemplate, it is their souls. It is no longer their voices which they hear, it is the very palpitation of their thoughts. And when at last, by quite a different processus, although related, they also arrive at that obscure and troubled point when the being is unconscious of itself, a sort of delicious benumbedness of the will which seems at once to be the *summum* and the *terminus* of human felicity, they do not come to themselves on this earth, but in heaven, for love has borne them beyond the stormy clouds of common passions in the pure ether of sublime ideality! [*A pause.*]

Paul [*to* JEANNE]. He's going to kiss her!

Bel. Lucy! Dear, Lucy! Do you understand me? Oh, say that you understand!

Lucy [*perplexed*]. But . . . it seems to me that the two concepts . . .

Paul. Ho! Concepts! This is too much!

Lucy. The two concepts . . . are identical!

Paul. Oh, identical!

Bel. [*passionately*]. Identical! Oh, Lucy, you are cruel! Identical!!! But realize that all this is subjective!

Paul. Subjective!! Oh, I've got to do something crazy!

Bel. [*still more wrought up*]. Subjective, Lucy! Do comprehend me!

Lucy [*deeply moved*]. But, Bellac! . . . Subjective! . . .

Jeanne [*to* PAUL]. He isn't going to kiss her!

Paul. Then I'm going to kiss you!

Jeanne [*defending herself*]. Paul! Paul! [*Sound of kisses.*]

Bellac and Lucy start up in alarm, and the Duchess also rises, astonished.

Duch. Why! Why! They're kissing!

Lucy. Somebody's there! Somebody's there!

Bellac. Come! Take my hand.

Lucy. They were listening to us. Oh, Bellac, I told you so.

Bel. Come!

Lucy. Oh, I am horribly compromised!

Bel. I will make reparation, my dear young lady. I will make reparation.

Paul and Jeanne come out of concealment and mimic Bellac and Lucy, repeating a number of their expressions. When, at the end, Paul cries: "Identical! Oh, cruel one! Realize that all this is subjective!" and Jeanne answers: "Oh, Bellac, subjective!" the Duchess supplies the kisses on the back of her hand.

Paul. We're caught!

Jeanne. They've been listening to us!

Paul [*dragging her along*]. Come, come!

Jeanne. Oh, Paul, perhaps they were there from the beginning!

Paul. I will make reparation, my dear angel. I will make reparation.

The Duchess reminds Mme. de Céran that she must go back and look out for her guests, and also for the Revel candidacy, and so gets rid of her before Suzanne enters. Suzanne hides, and then Roger comes in and does the same. They have been spying on each other, and when the Duchess makes a sound as if to call some one's attention Suzanne thinks Roger made it, taking her for Lucy, while Roger thinks that she made it, taking him for Bellac.

Rog. [*low*]. Is that you?

Suz. Yes.

Rog. Did you get my letter?

Suz. Yes. Otherwise I shouldn't have come to meet you.

Each is surprised that the other does not perceive who is talking, and they draw near in the dim light and sit side by side, keeping their faces averted in order not to reveal

themselves. When at last Roger has taken Suzanne's hands and then put his arm around her she leaps to her feet.

Suz. Oh, this is too much!

Rog. Yes, it is too much!

Suz. Look at me, will you! Suzanne! Not Lucy, Suzanne. Do you understand?

Rog. And I am Roger! Not Bellac, Roger! Do you understand?

Suz. Bellac?

Rog. Oh, miserable child! So it was true . . . Oh, Suzanne! Suzanne! What a misfortune! How you hurt me! Well, he is coming. I shall wait.

Suz. What? Who?

Rog. But don't you know that I have seen the letter?

Suz. The letter! It was I who read it. Your letter!

Rog. My letter? Bellac's letter!

Suz. Bellac's! Yours?

Rog. Mine!

Suz. Yours! . . . To Lucy!

Rog. To Lucy? To you, to you, to you!

Suz. To Lucy, to Lucy, to Lucy! . . . who lost it!

Rog. [*astounded*]. Lost!

Suz. Oh, I was there when she asked the servant to find it. You can't deny it. And I found it!

Rog. [*enlightened*]. Found!

Suz. Yes, yes, I found it, and the rendezvous, and the headache . . . and everything . . . I know all about it. And you took me for her.

Rog. I?

Suz. [*tears beginning to get the better of her*]. Yes, you! . . . You took me for her, and you were saying to her that you loved her! Yes . . . yes . . . Why did you tell me that you did not love her? Yes, why? You told me that, and that you wouldn't marry her. Why did you say that? You shouldn't have said so. Marry her if you want to. It's all the same to me, but you shouldn't have told me that. You deceived me. You lied to me. It wasn't right. Since you loved her you shouldn't have . . . you should have . . . [*Throws herself in his arms.*] Oh, don't marry her! Don't marry her! Don't marry her!

Roger is so delighted to know that the note was not ad-

dressed to Suzanne that he hardly pays attention to anything else. He assures her that he did not write it, but she makes him say that he will not marry Lucy. Then he tells her not to cry any more.

Suz. I can't help it.

Rog. But why?

Suz. Because I have only you, Roger. I don't want you to leave me.

Rog. To leave you?

Suz. [*still crying*]. I'm jealous. You know . . . You don't understand that. No, no. I saw that clearly enough when I tried to get you mad with Bellac. You didn't even look at me. It was all the same to you about Bellac.

Rog. But I wanted to kill him!

Suz. Kill him! [*She throws herself on his neck.*] Oh, how nice you are!

Roger makes her sit beside him and begins to talk to her affectionately as if she were a child whom he had not seen for some time, but he warms up a little at the task and it is in a tone of considerable tenderness that he says he really loves his dear little Suzanne. It remains for the Duchess, however, to complete the understanding by stepping out, turning up the gas, and saying that Suzanne shall be Roger's wife. Roger realizes suddenly that he does love Suzanne.

The guests come into the conservatory. Mme. de Céran announces a great piece of news to her aunt, the death of Revel. It is in an evening paper. Toulonnier says, however, that he has received a telegram saying that Revel is getting better. The Duchess sees that Toulonnier knew before he came that the report of Revel's sickness was false, but contents herself with announcing her own news. Everybody is eager to hear it.

Duch. First, the marriage of our friend, Miss Lucy Watson, to Professor Bellac.

Everybody. To Bellac! Really!

Bel. [*low*]. Duchess!

Duch. Ah . . . make reparation!

Bel. Rep . . . Well, gladly! Ah, Lucy!

Lucy [*astonished*]. Pardon me, Madame? . . .

Duch. [*low*]. Oh, you must make reparation, my child.

Lucy [*low*]. There can be no reparation when there was

no offence, Madame, and you are wrong to say I must do it.

Bel. What?

Lucy. My feelings being in accord with my will. [*Gives him her hand.*]

Bel. Ah, Lucy!

Mme. de Loudan. Oh, Lucy, you are happy before all women!

Duch. And another announcement is the marriage of my dear nephew, Roger de Céran . . .

Mme. de C. Duchess!

Duch. To a girl whom I love with all my heart . . .

Mme. de C. Aunt!

Duch. My sole legatee . . .

Mme. de C. Your . . .

Duch. The heir to all my property and my name. In short, my adopted daughter, Mademoiselle Suzanne de Villiers de Réville.

The Duchess calls Paul Raymond aside and asks him how he is going to make reparation. He is rather sheepish, but she tells him that so long as he did not say anything bad about her that she will forgive him, and lastly, she assures him that he shall be a prefect.

THE CROWS*

By Henry Becque

Translated by Benedict Papot

First played in Paris at the Comédie Française on September 14, 1882.

Argument: A prosperous manufacturer is suddenly overtaken by death. His partner, attorney, and architect, and numerous tradesmen as well, are the "Crows" who immediately pounce upon the widow and three daughters. The doubtful issue is whether these unfortunates will find some means of protecting themselves or will be reduced to abject poverty.

The brilliant and too luxurious furnishings of the Vignerons' parlor are eloquent of newly acquired wealth. Despite the fact that the father of the family is dozing on the sofa, Judith, the eldest daughter, is playing on the piano. Marie is seated by her father, sewing, and Blanche is writing at a table.

Mme. Vigneron enters. She stops the piano-playing and asks Blanche if she has finished the menus, which the "Bourgeois' Cook Book" says should be laid at the dinner plates of the guests. The dinner that night is in honor of Blanche's betrothal, and they have invited, among others, the witnesses to the written contract by which Blanche's father settles a substantial sum on George de Saint-Genis, his future son-in-law.

At the moment when Vigneron wakes up he hears Blanche saying that she could do without the company of M. Teissier. He asks why she should slight his partner. She replies that Teissier is old, coarse, ugly, miserly, and always looks at one stealthily. Marie questions her father anx-

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iously about his health. She thinks he should work less, enjoy his fortune a little more, and take better care of himself when he is sick.

Vigneron replies that he is not sick. He is only a little tired from taking the annual inventory of the firm. No longer than a week ago, he remarks, they were offered 600,000 francs for the factory. He declares that in ten years he will sell it for a million, and that in the meantime he will make as much more. He is buying land and building houses.

It is evident that the good man has been in the habit of speaking quite freely at home about his business. Blanche does not subscribe to the view that he is indebted to Teissier for everything, for Teissier was not successful until he took her father into business with him.

Gaston, the only son, comes in. His father takes him to task gently for being a young scamp, gives him money, and tells him to amuse himself, for before long he shall have to go into the factory and learn the business. As soon as he has started for his office, Mme. Vigneron sends out Judith, Marie, and Gaston, and has a talk with Blanche about her manners when her intended is present. She wishes Blanche to appear less absorbed in George when others are about. As she dismisses Blanche, Mme. de Saint-Genis enters.

Mme. de Saint-Genis has asked the notary to correct what she terms an omission in the marriage contract. The dowry is to be 200,000 francs, and as M. Vigneron asked to pay it in instalments, she says, until the full amount is made over it should bring the young people interest at five or six per cent. She changes the subject to show that the matter is disposed of. Incidentally, she advises Mme. Vigneron not to receive the young ladies' music teacher, M. Merckens, any more, and will say nothing further when Mme. Vigneron replies that her daughters have never had to complain of him or his lessons.

M. Merckens is announced. Mme. Vigneron takes Mme. de Saint-Genis to see some purchases that she has made and tell her whether they are the correct thing. August, the servant, brings M. Merckens into the parlor, treating him in a most patronizing manner. When Judith comes down August observes that Mademoiselle did not

take long to dress but made good use of her time. Merckens is furious. He can find nothing so good to say, but soothes his vanity presently by an allusion to his own wittiness.

It appears that there is a little conspiracy between pupil and teacher. Judith is secretly devoting herself to musical composition. Merckens returns one of her pieces. It is refined and interesting he remarks, somewhat sad—perhaps she had a cold that day. The title of the piece is "Good-bye to the Bride." That explains why Judith was sad when she wrote it. The music master imagines that she is piqued because the young man did not ask for the oldest daughter instead of the youngest.

Art is all sufficient to her Judith says. He deplores her lack of temperament to bring out her talent, but assures her that she has fire, brilliancy, soul—especially soul, and advises her to go on the stage. She thinks his lessons better than his advice.

When Mme. Vigneron returns to the room she is wearing a loud dress and too much jewelry. Teissier arrives shortly after. He insists upon sitting in a corner by himself while waiting for dinner. Mme. de Saint-Genis says he has the eyes of a fox and the mouth of a monkey.

Bourdon, the notary, comes next. He learns from Teissier that the Bar Association is considering an investigation of some of his sharp practices, but is not at all disturbed. George de Saint-Genis brings M. Lenormand, one of his witnesses, and General Fromentin, the other, is not far behind them.

August announces "Monsieur Vigneron." Gaston comes in wearing a dressing-gown and mimics his father. Some of the guests are taken in, but the game is interrupted by the entrance of a physician who tells Mme. Vigneron to send the children out of the room. He informs her that M. Vigneron has just died from an attack of apoplexy. The body of M. Vigneron is brought in. Mme. Vigneron, with a heart-rending cry, throws herself upon the corpse of her husband.

Less than a month later Mme. de Saint-Genis calls on Mme. Vigneron in regard to a matter of some importance. She reproves the widow, who cannot restrain her tears, for

being neither reasonable nor courageous, and taking no thought of the future, either for herself or her daughters. She suspects that Mme. Vigneron in her present state has not thought of her affairs for an instant.

Mme. de Saint-Genis. You must realize that M. Vigneron's estate will not liquidate itself; there will be interest to settle and perhaps difficulties to solve.

Mme. Vigneron. No, Madam, no difficulties whatsoever. My husband was too honest a man to ever have had complicated dealings.

Mme. de S.-G. They may become such after his death. Understand me correctly. I do not suspect M. Vigneron's honesty, but I suspect the honesty of others. M. Teissier hasn't moved yet?

Mme. V. M. Teissier stayed home as usual. I needed money; he sent me the amount I asked for after some urging on my part; our relations did not go any further until now.

Mme. de S.-G. Listen to what I am going to tell you, Madame Vigneron, and even if my advice should be wrong in this instance, take it as a rule of conduct. Distrust M. Teissier.

Mme. V. All right, Madam, I shall distrust him. But supposing that his intentions toward us were bad, it is not I who would make him listen to reason, but my notary.

Mme. de S-G. Distrust your notary.

Mme. V. Oh, Madam!

Mme. de S-G. Don't say, oh! Madam Vigneron, I know these legal gentlemen. One never knows whether they rescue you or betray you, and with them one is always in the wrong.

Mme. V. What will you say then, Madam, when you learn that M. Bourdon, my notary, is at the same time M. Teissier's notary?

Mme. de S-G. I shall tell you to take another.

Mme. V. No, Madam; I have absolute confidence in M. Bourdon and shall dismiss him only after he has lost it.

Mme. de S-G. It will be too late then.

It surprises Mme. de Saint-Genis that Mme. Vigneron should see honest people everywhere. She wishes that the estate might be easily settled; but in business nothing goes easily, she says; what is simple is complicated, what is

complicated is incomprehensible. Lastly, she observes that it will no longer be possible for Mme. Vigneron to keep her financial engagements, and nothing in the world would make Mme. de Saint-Genis allow her son to contract a marriage for which he would have the right to reproach her later. The most useful and friendly recommendation she can make to Mme. Vigneron is to distrust everybody, everybody!

M. Teissier, Mme. Vigneron also receives in tears. It was work, she says, that killed her husband. He wanted to see his children happy in his lifetime and leave them a fortune after his death. After a moment of silence Teissier asks if she authorized Mme. de Saint-Genis to call upon him and inquire in what situation the death of M. Vigneron left his wife. He took the lady by the arm and pushed her out of his office. Mme. Vigneron replies that she did not ask Mme. de Saint-Genis to act for her, but asks for information from M. Teissier now.

From his calculations, after the factory is sold, after the lots and buildings are disposed of, he replies, she will have about fifty thousand francs. She thinks he means an income of that amount, but he quickly disabuses her mind of any such misconception. Going quickly to her desk she writes a note to M. Bourdon, asking him to come to see her at once, and gives it to August to deliver. Teissier pulls out a portfolio filled with papers, and begins to say that she will understand better when she reads something that he has to show her. She turns to him with an exclamation of "Fifty thousand francs!" and strikes the portfolio out of his hand. She says she will have nothing more to do with him, and goes out hurriedly.

Teissier picks up his papers. He is so intent upon what he has in mind that he mutters that if Bourdon can manage the affair as he has promised he can get hold of properties worth double what he shall have to pay.

Marie enters. Teissier tells her she has come in just in time to keep him from going to have her mother subpœnaed to make her return the money that he has advanced her. There was 4,000 francs for the funeral, 5,000 for household expenses, and then 10,000 on a note that Gaston signed. Marie asks for advice. She tells him to consider their situation and say what they ought to do.

Teissier. Ah! Let us leave aside your buildings which do not concern me. What are you going to do with the factory?

Marie. What would happen if we wished to keep it and you wished to sell it?

Teis. It would be sold. That point is covered by law.

Marie. There is a law?

Teis. [*still smiling*]. Yes, mademoiselle, there is a law. There is Article 815 of the Civil Code, which authorizes either of us to liquidate the partnership, which was broken in fact by the death of your father. I wish to give you the opportunity of making sure of this at once. [*Pulling a book from his pocket.*] You see what this is: "Compendium of the laws and regulations in force in all French territories." I never go out without taking my code along, I advise you to form that habit, too. [*He hands her the volume open at the page; while she is reading the article, he looks at her with a mixture of interest, pleasure, and mockery.*] Do you understand?

He questions her closely about herself, asking if she is not the second daughter, the one her father considered the most reasonable, if she does not help her mother with the details of the household, and if she does not figure readily. He says to himself that she must figure like an angel. She brings him back to the value of the properties. He asks how he is to know that after manœuvring cleverly they will not want to sell the factory themselves, to buy it up for half price. He thinks, however, that it is to the interest of both parties to sell the factory.

When Teissier has left, Marie imparts the news to Blanche that they are probably ruined. They fall into each other's arms, but Marie quickly controls herself and says that they must be prudent and resigned. It makes her sad to think that the marriage is on Blanche's mind, and that perhaps it is no longer possible. Blanche says Marie judges George very wrongly if she thinks he cares more for her dowry than for her heart.

Blanche. If I thought M. de Saint-Genis sought me only for my dowry, I should be the most ashamed of women, and if, my dowry being lost, he hesitated to marry me, I should become mad or die.

Marie. Do you love him so much?

Blanche. Yes, I love him! I adore him, if you want to know! He is gentle, he is tender, he is a child like myself. I am certain that he has a good heart and that he is incapable of a bad action. You understand, don't you, that I want him as a husband? And even if I were mistaken in him, if he deserved neither my affection nor my esteem, if he were the lowest of men, I must marry him now.

Marie [*aside*]. The poor child is suffering and raving.

Blanche. Oh! what a mistake we made! What a mistake! You know me, sister, we have been living together for twenty years without a secret between us. Am I not a pretty little girl, very loving it is true, but very honest also? I never had a thought that could not be expressed. If I had met M. de Saint-Genis in the street or elsewhere, I would not even have looked at him. He came here with his hand in my father's hand. We took a fancy to each other at once and we were betrothed right away. Mamma used to warn me to be more discreet with my betrothed, but he was my betrothed and I saw no danger nor great harm in trusting him.

Marie. Come, calm yourself, you are exaggerating as always. You told M. de Saint-Genis that you loved him, didn't you; you are quite excusable since you were to marry him. You used to hold hands sometimes and perhaps you kissed; that's wrong, of course, but that doesn't deserve your reproaching yourself as you do.

Blanche, after some hesitation, says that she is George's wife. Marie does not understand her and Blanche tells her to forget what she said. Bourdon has already received Mme. Vigneron's note, and comes in. He tells Marie that her father's estate does not present very serious difficulties, yet that her father left a large land deal which has to be examined closely and liquidated as soon as possible. Mme. Vigneron now comes in.

Bourdon refers to a call that Mme. de Saint-Genis paid him, but says he received her in such a way that she will not come again, and tells Mme. Vigneron to come to the point. She asks if it is true, if it is possible that her husband leaves her only fifty thousand francs in all. It is possible, the notary replies guardedly, that slightly more may be obtained. He asks if she was hoping that the estate would be large. How much did she think it would be?

Surely she must have ascertained what M. Vigneron left her. That is the first thing one does on losing a husband. He sees that she knows nothing about her husband's affairs and tells her that she is facing the evident necessity of selling her husband's properties.

Marie. What do you think we will get for them?

Bourdon [*going to* MARIE]. What you will get for them, mademoiselle? Nothing! You must not count on clearing anything.

Mme. V. [*rising*]. What advantage is there in selling, then, if that is the case?

Bour. [*coming back to* MME. VIGNERON]. What advantage, Madam? The advantage of getting rid of a ball and chain which is tied to your ankle. Believe me, it is not my custom to be as positive as I am now when I offer advice. Each day of delay is portentous in its consequences for you. While you are deliberating Catiline stands at the gates of Rome. To be specific, Catiline is the mortgage which is eating you up, your architect who is lying in wait for you with his bill, the government which will claim its dues.

Enter TEISSIER, *L. E.:* BLANCHE *behind him.*

Teis. 'Morning, Bourdon.

Bour. Good morning, Teissier. I was just explaining to Madam Vigneron and her daughter how impossible it is for them to keep their lots.

Teis. I have nothing to do with that. The ladies cannot have a better adviser than you. They are in good hands.

Bour. I beg of you, Madam, notice the point of view I take, so that there may be no misunderstanding between us. I do not wish to expose myself later to reproaches which I do not deserve. I merely wish to establish this point: The *statu quo* is harmful to your interests, get out of the *statu quo.* I am not telling you, far from it, that the condition of your properties is excellent and the moment is well chosen to offer them at auction. No. And yet, if I present the proposition in its most favorable aspect, and I shall not fail to do so, we might perhaps obtain a satisfactory result with a little charlatanism and beating of the bass drum, and——

Teis. [*aside*]. What's that? what's that? [*In a low tone to* BOURDON.] Aren't we agreed any more?

Bour. [*in a low tone*]. Let me manage this. [*Going to* MME. VIGNERON.] Come, Madam, make up your mind, and make it up quickly, I advise you to. Let me know when you have decided. [*Makes ready to go.*]

Teis. Don't go, Bourdon, before we have spoken of the factory.

Bour. The factory can wait, my dear M. Teissier. Before anything else, I would like to relieve Mme. Vigneron of her lots. We are in the presence of a widow and her four children who have been impoverished within a day; this is a very distressing situation, do not let us forget that. [TEISSIER *smiles.*]

M. Lefort, the architect, joins the conference. He is a loud-voiced man with common manners. He says he is not afraid to say what he thinks before Teissier and Bourdon. He tells Marie where to find a memorandum on the real estate which explains the whole proposition from A to Z. She gets it and Bourdon and Lefort tear it in two and appropriate the halves. Meanwhile Teissier is examining Mme. Vigneron about Marie. Is she orderly? Is she going to make a capable woman? Does she figure readily?

Lefort [*hammering each one of his sentences*]. From the beginning, M. Vigneron's lots, situated as they were at the extremity of Paris, close to a railroad station, and encumbered because of this by numberless restrictions, were, at the price he paid for them, a very bad speculation. Let us speak plainly—he was taken in.

Bour. I'll stop you there. No one was interested in deceiving M. Vigneron. He bought these lots in the hope that they would be condemned.

Lef. Condemned? By whom?

Bour. By the railroad.

Lef. What a joke! It was the railroad that was selling them!

Bour. Are you sure of that?

Lef. Perfectly sure.

Bour. Very well; then it was supposed that the city, which had begun vast improvements in the outlying districts, would need the property. I remember now—we hoped to deal with the city.

Lef. With the city or with the Sultan of Turkey. You

can't tell me anything about real estate. I know Paris from A. to Z. I proceed. M. Vigneron, who had been taken in, I repeat, soon became aware of his foolishness and wished to repair it. How? By building. He came to me. He had known my conscientiousness and my disinterestedness for a long time; I did not leave him until he entrusted his work to me. Unfortunately, my plans were no sooner made and the foundations begun when —[*comical pantomime*]—Vigneron skipped for the other world.

Bour. We all know those details, Monsieur; you are wasting our time telling us about them.

Lef. The heirs find themselves in a tight place, but they can come out of it to their advantage. They have at their disposal a devoted, intelligent man who enjoys universal consideration in Paris—the architect of the deceased, who becomes their own. Will they listen to him? If they disregard his advice and his direction—[*comic pantomime*]—the game is lost.

Bour. State your proposal without so much verbosity, I pray.

Lef. Let us consider the most unfavorable hypothesis. M. Lefort, who is now addressing you, is dismissed. His bill is settled, loyally, without quibbling over each item. M. Lefort does not ask anything more for himself. What becomes of the property? I repeat, it lies far from the centre, is hampered by restrictions, and, I may add, loaded down with mortgages, as many reasons which will be brought to bear against the owner for the benefit of a mysterious purchaser who will surely happen along. [*With great volubility.*] The property will be depreciated, the sale will be hastened, purchasers will be kept away, the court will be deceived so as to obtain a ridiculously upset price, the bids will be smothered—[*comic pantomime*]—there's a property reduced to nothing.

Bour. Be specific; I demand that you be specific. You say such and such things will be done. Who is to do it, if you please? Do you know that such manœuvres could be practised by only one person, and that you are incriminating the notary in charge of the sale?

Lef. Maybe it's you.

Bour. I am not speaking for myself, but for all my col-

leagues who are accused by you. You speak very lightly of the most honorable corporation that I know. You cast suspicion upon the law itself in the person of the public officer whose duty it is to carry it out. You do worse than that, if it were possible: you disturb the security of families. How suitable it is for you to hurl such an accusation when you present a bill of thirty-seven thousand francs!

Lef. I ask leave to be present when you present yours.

Bour. Let us end this. State briefly what you propose.

Lef. I am getting there. I propose to the heirs to keep on building——

Bour. Of course! Why did you not say that at first? You are the architect; you propose to keep on building.

Lef. Let me finish.

Bour. That is useless. If Mme. Vigneron is willing to listen to you, she is at liberty to do so; but as for me, I shall listen no longer to such rambling. What amount do you put up? Mme. Vigneron has no money, I warn you; where is yours? Three months from now we would be in the same position, with this difference—that your bill, which to-day is thirty-seven thousand francs, would be twice as large, at the rate you are going. Do not compel me to say more. I take your offer for what it seems to mean. I do not wish to see it in the light of some dark combination which would make you a landlord at a small cost.

Lef. What's that? Look me in the face, will you? Do I look like a man capable of a dark combination? Upon my word, I have never seen such a puppet as you!

Bour. [*restraining himself, low*]. What's that you call me, you mountebank?

[MME. VIGNERON *rises to interfere.*]

Teis. Leave them alone, Madam; do not say a word. One must never interrupt a business conversation.

Lef. [*to* MME. VIGNERON]. I'll withdraw, Madam. If you wish to know my plans and the resources at my disposal, you will send for me. If not, you will be kind enough to settle my bill as soon as possible. I have to make advances for all my clients—while a notary messes with the money of his. [*Exit.*

Teis. Wait for me, Lefort; we'll go part way together. [*To* MME. VIGNERON.] I'll leave you with Bourdon, Madam; make the most of having him here.

Lef. [*coming back*]. I forget to tell you, Madam: Was it with your authorization that Mme. de Saint-Genis called at my office?

Mme. V. She called on every one. I authorized no one to go and see you, M. Lefort—no one—and if the lady were to call again——

Lef. The lady will not call again. I made her go down the stairs quicker than she came up.

Teissier says good-bye especially to Marie, telling her to keep in good health. He comes back again to admonish her to remain what she is. She will have no lack of suitors. If he were not so old he would be one himself. He goes out with Lefort.

Mme. Vigneron thinks she made a mistake in bringing about such a meeting. Then, although she says M. Lefort has no manners, what he proposed was exactly what her husband meant to do. Bourdon inquires if she can be speaking seriously, after hearing his comments on Lefort. Mme. Vigneron says they might get another architect. That is not enough, replies Bourdon. They will look at the situation in its best aspect. Let them admit for the instant that the lots belong to her. Between 400,000 and 500,000 francs are needed to finish the houses, he says. Is that a suitable undertaking for a woman? As family counsel, whose duty it is to help her as executrix and guardian of her minor children, he opposes it.

Left to themselves, the widow and her daughters try vainly to arrive at a decision. Each has a different opinion, but none urges it with any certainty. Mme. Vigneron finally says that if they have to sell their lots they shall have to sell their lots, but that while she lives they shall not touch the factory.

Marie. M. Teissier may sell it to-morrow. There is a law which authorizes him to do so.

Mme. V. While I live——

Marie. There is a law.

Blanche and Judith. If there is a law——

Mme. V. Leave me alone with your law. If I were to have many days like this, children, I could not stand it;

you would be without a mother before long! [*Lets herself fall upon the sofa and weeps.*]

August brings in bills with imperative demands for payment from a number of tradespeople.

M. Teissier soon forms the habit of coming frequently to the Vignerons'. He drops in at breakfast, and although the young ladies do not like him they think it necessary to be agreeable. He now enters the parlor, arm in arm with Marie, followed by Mme. Vigneron, Judith, and Blanche. Marie releases herself and walks away from Teissier. He follows her.

Teissier. Your sisters are good-looking, especially the eldest, who is very pretty; and yet it is you I prefer. I have not always been old. I can still distinguish a brunette from a blonde. You are very pleasing to me; do you hear?

Marie. Do turn toward my mother.

Teis. Tell me, Madam, why M. Gaston, who is so handy making notes, did not breakfast with us?

Mme. V. [*showing great emotion*]. My son enlisted.

Teis. So he is a soldier. That's the best thing he could do. A soldier is housed, fed, and kept warm at government's expense. What does he risk? To have himself killed. Then he doesn't need anything more.

Mme. V. My son did what he pleased. Later, he will regret his decision. I would have arranged with you, M. Teissier, to place him in the factory, and if this factory, as I believe, does not get out of your hands and ours, in a few years Gaston would have succeeded his father. [*A pause.*]

Teis. Have you seen Bourdon?

Mme. V. No; were we to have seen him?

Teis. [*embarrassed, goes back to* MARIE *without answering*]. Your sisters are good-looking, but they are Parisians; you can see that at once. No color. One would never think, on looking at you, that you were brought up with them. In the summer I have roses in my garden which have no prettier color than your cheeks. You must come and see my country house, with your mother and sisters. You are no longer children; you will not spoil anything. You can breakfast at home before starting, and you will be back in time for dinner. You haven't much distraction; that will be one for you.

Marie. Do not think, M. Teissier, that we shall visit you before being a little easier in mind. As you know, our situation has not improved; it's becoming more complicated—that's all. We are tormented now by tradesmen with whom we used to deal, and who have become very impatient creditors.

Teis. [*embarrassed, goes back to* MME. VIGNERON *without answering*]. If your occupations call you, Madam, do not stay for me; your young ladies will keep me company until my departure.

Mme. V. Remain as long as you please; we are not sending you away. [*Going to* MARIE.] Did you speak to M. Teissier?

Marie. No, not yet.

Mme. V. It goes against you?

Marie. Yes, it does. Twelve thousand francs—it's a large amount to us.

Mme. V. Don't let's ask for it.

Marie. And where shall we be to-morrow if the dressmaker sues on her bill? And she will do it, as she said she would.

Teissier asks Judith if Marie will make a woman who would like to stay at home and take care of an old person, and who could be trusted with keys. When Marie approaches him regarding the loan he makes a fuss, mentions the fact that he has taken measures to secure the payment of all that Mme. Vigneron owes him, which with this last amount will make 32,000 francs, and goes to get the money.

Mme. Vigneron asks Judith to take charge of their business affairs.

Judith. You know my opinion; it will not change. We shall do nothing, and there is nothing to be done.

Mme. V. And yet, my child, if we are being robbed?

Judith. Well, we shall be robbed. It's neither you nor I who shall prevent it. It isn't Marie, either. She must see now that we are only temporizing to meet a greater disaster. I would prefer, a thousand times, a thousand times, to get through with all this to-morrow and take what they are willing to leave us, since they are willing to leave us something. If the past didn't worry us any more, we should think of the future.

Mme. V. You speak of the future very lightly, my child.

Judith. It worries me, but it does not frighten me. Blanche is the most unfortunate, I think. She is losing a husband she liked.

The effect of Judith's logic is to wound her mother, whom she regards as incompetent, to discourage Marie, and reduce Blanche to tears. Blanche persists that George loves her and will marry her despite the lack of a dowry. She admits that they are not defending themselves very seriously, but says that the decisiveness which they lack in business she will have where her marriage is concerned. Mme. Vigneron protests that they are always saying that they lack decision, and yet whenever she proposes coming to a decision they are the first to advise against it.

The question is, shall they discharge M. Bourdon, she says. They might take that gentleman who sent his business card to them, M. Duhamel. It is not long before Bourdon comes in, and Mme. Vigneron lays the matter before him. She says he is giving himself a great deal of trouble with her affairs for the little profit he is going to get out of it, and that she has heard of an honorable and intelligent man whom they might engage. She shows him Duhamel's card. In a few well-chosen words Bourdon gives the gentleman a very bad character. Duhamel would have only to agree with another rascal, Lefort for instance, and M. Vignernon's estate would vanish entirely.

Having disposed of this matter so decisively, Bourdon goes on to say that one of the mass of mortgages on the lots is almost due. A renewal cannot be obtained, and so sixty and some odd thousand francs will have to be paid shortly. Then there is the inheritance tax to be met at once. (It is evident that Bourdon sees he can put a substantial amount in his own pocket and charge it to the inheritance tax.) While they are stirring themselves up without getting anywhere, he says, awaiting he does not know what event that will not take place, Teissier, like the business man he is, has gone ahead and made all arrangements for selling the factory. There is only one condition on which he can get Teissier's consent to putting off the sale, and that is that she will get rid of her lots.

Merckens is announced and Mme. Vigneron goes to consult with her daughters. When Bourdon informs the music master that it is certain that Mlle. Judith will not begin her

lessons again M. Merckens says he will skip. He doesn't stop to speak to Mme. Vigneron, although she enters the room as he is going out.

Mme. Vigneron has an air of resolution. Teissier's decision is so disastrous to them, she says, that he dares not impart it to them himself. They intend to corner him and let him know that he is committing a bad action. She thinks that Marie may be able to make him change his mind. Bourdon takes occasion to say that if Teissier were disposed to marry this young girl it would not be such a bad thing for her to marry him. Mme. Vigneron replies that they expect nothing of M. Teissier, but that the factory belongs to them as much as to him, and that he is abusing the right the law gives him by disposing to suit himself of her husband's work and her children's property.

Teissier returns to renew operations. Bourdon expresses surprise that he should have taken breakfast with the family when he is hostile to their interests, and lets fall a hint that he must prepare for a siege on the part of his ingénue, as the family are depending on her to get the best of him. Bourdon leaves Teissier with Marie. Teissier has brought the money she asked for, and tells her not to hesitate to make the tradesmen cut down their bills, and to be careful not to pay the same one twice. He asks her what she is going to do, but she replies she does not know, work is so hard to find for a woman and so poorly paid.

Teissier. That's what I wanted to make you say. [*A pause; he proceeds with hesitation and embarrassment.*] I know a house where, if you wanted to, you could go and stay. You would have lodging, food, and a small amount every month which you could save for later. You would no longer have to worry about yourself.

Marie. What house? Yours?

Teis. [*with an equivocal smile*]. Mine.

Marie [*after showing her emotion, not knowing what she is to understand nor what she is to answer*]. What you are proposing to me is not possible. In the first place, my mother would not let me go away from her.

Teis. Yes, I suspect that your mother would raise objections, but you are old enough to-day not to listen to any one and to consider your own interests.

Marie. I told you no, M. Teissier, no.

Teis. Wouldn't you be glad to leave your family and their troubles and to get out of it yourself? I would have that feeling in your place.

Marie. It isn't mine.

She tells him that it isn't necessary for him to marry to have people around him, and asks if he has no relatives.

Teis. I stopped seeing my relatives to protect myself from their requests for money; they are starving. I would like very much to secure a simple, gentle, and safe little person, who would keep my house decently and would not pillage it. I would see a little later if I ought not to marry her. But you are all lambs before marriage, and no one can know what you will become afterward. I should regulate my conduct upon hers; she would not be very unhappy while I am alive, and she would have no reason to complain after I am dead; married or not married, it would be the same thing for her.

Marie. Get up, M. Teissier, and go away. I do not wish to be near you another minute. I believe that you are unhappy, and I pity you. I believe that your proposition was honest and acceptable, and I thank you for it. Yet, it might hide a thought, such an odious thought that my heart fails me at the bare suspicion of it. Go away.

Teis. [*standing, embarrassed, and stammering*]. Let us see what you had to tell me.

Marie. Nothing, nothing, nothing! I would be ashamed now to speak to you of my family, ashamed for them as much as for myself. You will think about it. You will remember what my father was, and whether you owe nothing to his honesty, his work, and his memory. [*She quickly goes to the writing desk, takes out the bank bills and gives them to him.*] Take back your money. Take it back without embarrassment. M. Bourdon has just put himself at our disposition and we will find at his office what we should not have asked you for. Go away. Go away or I shall call Rosalie, who will put you out.

Mme. de Saint-Genis comes to have a final understanding with Blanche. Love, she says, is all very fine, very vague, and very poetic, but a passion, however great it may be, never lasts very long and does not lead anywhere. You cannot pay your landlord and your baker with it.

Blanche [*quickly*]. This marriage must take place, Madam, and it will.

Mme. de S.-G. [*gently*]. It will, if I am willing.

Blanche. You will consent, Madam.

Mme. de S.-G. I don't think so.

Blanche. Yes, Madam, yes, you will consent. There are affections so sincere that even a mother has no right to break them. There are engagements so sacred that a man loses his honor in not keeping them.

Blanche says that the loss of her dowry does not affect George in the least. She finds him all the more impatient to marry her. In reply, Mme. de Saint-Genis seeks to implant the yeast of suggestion in her mind by asking if they ever know what men are thinking of. George is no more sincere than the others. Perhaps he is only awaiting an order to free himself from an embarrassing situation. Blanche replies that if she has to deal with a coward who hides behind his mother, he must not count on abandoning her so easily. She will reach him. She will break his position and destroy his future.

Mme. de S.-G. You will compromise yourself and nothing else. Perhaps that's what you wish. Happily, your mother will prevent you. She will consider that it is enough to have a stain in the family without adding scandal to it. Good-bye, mademoiselle.

Blanche [*detaining her*]. Do not go, Madam.

Mme. de S.-G. [*gently*]. We have nothing more to say to each other.

Blanche. Stay. I am crying, I am suffering. Touch my hand, I am in a constant fever.

Mme. de S.-G. Yes, I realize your agitation, you will get over it; while if you were married to my son, your regrets and his would be eternal.

Blanche. We love each other.

Mme. de S.-G. To-day, yes, but to-morrow——

Blanche. Consent, Madam, I beseech you.

Mme. de S.-G. Must I repeat to you the words you said to me a little while ago? Never! [BLANCHE *leaves her, walks back and forth, crosses the stage with signs of the deepest agitation and sorrow; she lets herself fall upon an armchair.* MADAM DE SAINT-GENIS *going slowly to* BLANCHE.] I deeply regret, my child, to seem so cruel

to you and to leave you in such a state. And yet I am right, quite right. A woman of my age and of my experience, who has seen all that can be seen in this world, knows the value of things, and does not exaggerate some at the expense of others.

Blanche [*throwing herself at her knees*]. Listen to me, Madam. What's to become of me, if your son does not marry me? It is his duty. I know no other more noble nor easier toward a woman who loves him. Do you believe that if ours were an ordinary engagement I would stoop to call him back? I would break my heart rather than to offer it to him who scorns it and would no longer be worthy of it. But your son must marry me; it is his duty, I shall repeat it forever. All other considerations vanish before that. You speak to me of the future, let it be what it will, I am only thinking of the past, which will make me die of shame and sorrow.

Mme. de Saint-Genis tells Blanche that the image of her son which fills Blanche's thoughts at present will vanish little by little, quicker than she believes. She is young. Many suitors will present themselves, and she will choose, not the most brilliant, but the most solid, and then she will say Mme. de Saint-Genis was right.

Blanche. Who are you, Madam, to give me such advice? What would your son say if he knew of it? I would rather be his mistress than another's wife.

Mme. de S.-G. His mistress! What an expression in your mouth. My son will know what expressions escape you, mademoiselle. They are the sign of your precocity.

Blanche. No, no, Madam. No, no, you will not repeat this frightful word which I blush to have uttered.

Mme. de S.-G. His mistress! I will tell you all then, since you can hear all. I never would have broken your marriage with my son on a question of interest. But I want my son's wife to bring him no suspicions as to her past nor worry as to the future. [*She goes toward the door.*]

Blanche. Oh! oh! oh! you insult me, Madam, without reason and without mercy.

Mme. de S.-G. Let me go, mademoiselle. His mistress! That's the language of a lost woman. [*She pushes* BLANCHE *away and leaves.*]

Blanche. Lost woman! She dared call me—infamous!

[*She bursts into tears.*] All is over now. George is weak, his mother dominates him, he will obey her. Lost woman! [*She weeps abundantly.*]

Blanche rings, and when Rosalie comes, asks for something to put over her shoulders, saying she is cold. After looking at her, Rosalie replies that she is going to put her to bed, which will be much better for her. At first Blanche objects, but then admits she is going to be sick. Her mind wanders and she thinks she sees her father. Exclaiming that she is a lost woman, she falls into Rosalie's arms and slides to the ground. First Marie, and then Mme. Vigneron and Judith enter. Blanche keeps muttering, "Lost woman!"

Mme. Vigneron. Judith, come here. [*They come down stage.*] You were right my child. All these affairs are not good for us. There, they are taking your sister to bed, tomorrow it will be you, and the day after it will be myself. You are still thinking that it is best to bring it to an end?

Judith. Yes, I do.

Mme. V. All right. You are going to take Rosalie with you and you will go to M. Bourdon. You will tell him that I accept everything, that I approve everything, and that I am in haste now to have everything terminated. You will add that I am as anxious as he. That's your opinion, isn't it?

Judith. It is.

Mme. V. Go, my big girl, go. [*They part.*] I am willing to keep what I have, but I want first to keep my children.

The Vignerons have moved into miserable quarters. M. Merckens, for whom Judith has had to send twice, finds the place smells of poverty. Rosalie tells him that poor Mme. Vigneron and her daughters are ruined. When the lawyers come behind a dead man, she tells him, you can say: "Here are the crows! They leave only what they can't take away."

Judith comes in. In reply to Merckens' half-serious questions she explains that they did not have money enough to defend their fortune. It would have taken 300,000 francs. He says she should have spoken to him. The next instant he remembers that he is in a great hurry, as

she says that before her father's death she little thought that they should feel the lack of relatives. He feels forced to inform her immediately that he is not very obliging.

What she wanted to speak to him about was her idea of giving lessons herself. He tells her she is not capable of teaching music. That reduces her to a second hope. Asking him not to see vanity or presumption in what she has in mind, she asks if she could not with the pieces that she has written and others that she might produce, secure a little comfort for all her people.

Merckens [*after having laughed*]. Look at me. [*He laughs again.*] Never repeat what you have just told me. You hear, never. They would laugh at you in the five parts of the world. [*He laughs again.*] A little comfort! is that all?

Judith. No, it is not all. We spoke formerly of a profession which I did not like, and which even to-day tempts me but little. But in the situation in which my family is, I must stop at nothing to help them out of their trouble. The stage?

Mer. Too late.

Judith. Why shouldn't I do what many others have done, who hesitated first and then summoned their courage?

Mer. Too late.

Judith. I have perhaps natural talent which lacks only training and practice.

Mer. Too late. One doesn't go on the stage without having prepared for it for a long time. You will never be an artist. You haven't what is required. At the present moment you would find on the stage only deceptions, or adventures, is that what you wish?

Judith. Then what can I do?

Mer. Nothing. I see what you have come to. You are not the first whom I find in this situation and to whom I give this answer. There are no resources for a woman, or, rather, there is only one. See here, mademoiselle, I am going to tell you the whole truth in one sentence. If you are pure, they will esteem you without helping you; if you are not, they will help you without esteeming you; you cannot hope for anything else. Do you wish to speak of the lessons again?

Judith. It is useless. I regret having disturbed you.

Mer. You send me away?

Judith. I do not detain you any longer.

Mer. Good-bye, mademoiselle.

Judith informs Marie that her plans have come to nothing, not only as to teaching but her secret design of making use of her voice on the stage.

Marie. You, sister, on the stage!

Judith. What of it? We must help ourselves and undertake something. We cannot wait until we have spent our last sou. Mother is too old to work and we would not allow it anyway. Who knows whether our poor Blanche will ever be in her right mind again? So we are left, you and I, and at that, what could you possibly do? You will have to work twelve hours a day to earn a franc and a half.

Marie. Tell me very sincerely what you think of Blanche's condition.

Judith. Better one day and worse the other. Every minute we think that she is going to recognize us, but she sees no one and hears nothing. I thought a great deal of this misfortune, and perhaps it spared us a worse one. If Blanche, hot-headed as she is, had learned by chance of the marriage of M. de Saint-Genis, who knows if the news would not have killed her? She is alive, that's the principal thing. She is not lost to us. If we must take care of her, we will take care of her; if we must deprive ourselves of bread for her, we will do without; she is no longer our sister, she is our child.

Marie. You are good, sister, and I love you. [*They kiss.*]

Judith. I also love you. I am abrupt at times, but I bear you all in my heart. It seems to me that it is I, the oldest, the big sister as you call me, who should get us out of trouble and put us all on our feet again How? I do not know. I seek a way and do not find any. If I could do it by throwing myself into the fire, I would have done it long ago. [*A pause.*]

Marie asks if Judith has heard of Bourdon's call in behalf of Teissier. Judith had not heard of it. She says that Marie must weigh the proposition, thinking of herself only, but if their position frightens her to marry Teissier, who will make her pay dearly enough for a little comfort and

security. The rest of them would be most guilty to advise her to make a sacrifice which is the greatest a woman can make.

Blanche enters, preceding her mother. She is pale, without strength, and has a vacant look. Her attitude is that of a mad woman at rest. Mme. Vigneron has aged and turned white. They sit down at the table and there is a long and sad silence. Mme. Vigneron suddenly bursts out weeping and sobbing, and exclaims: "Ah! children, if your father could see us." Bourdon enters softly.

Rosalie. How did you enter?

Bourdon. Through the door, which was open. You do wrong, my girl, to leave the entrance door open. Some one might rob your mistress.

Ros. [*under his nose*]. No danger. The job is done, and well done.

Bourdon states that he has come again on behalf of Teissier, and Mme. Vigneron sends out Rosalie, Judith, and Blanche. In case mademoiselle regrets her first decision, he says, she has the opportunity to change her mind.

Marie. I would like to know, M. Bourdon, and I pray you to tell me sincerely, whether M. Teissier is an honest man.

Bour. An honest man! What do you mean by that? I would not advise you, mademoiselle, in case you were to marry M. Teissier, to stake all your hopes upon a simple promise from him: but there are notaries to draw up contracts which establish the rights of the parties. Have I answered your question?

Marie. No, you did not understand it. An honest man, for a young girl, means many things.

Bour. Are you asking, mademoiselle, if Teissier made his fortune honestly?

Marie. Yes, I would like to be informed upon that point and upon others.

Bour. What are you bothering about? If one were to seek to-day, in France, the origin of all the fortunes, there are not a hundred, not fifty, which would stand a scrupulous examination. I speak of it knowingly, as a man who holds the threads in his office. Teissier has been in business all his life; he accumulated a considerable fortune which is quite his own, and which no one dreams of attacking; you don't need to know any more.

Marie. What is the usual conduct of M. Teissier? What are his tastes, his habits?

Bour. The tastes and habits of a man of his age. I do not think that you have much to fear on that side. I see now what your questions are leading to. Believe me, Teissier will be a husband too faithful rather than not enough, I leave it to your mother herself.

In their accursed affairs which terminated so badly, says Bourdon, they were obliged to submit to the laws of the stronger. To-day this law is in their favor. Mademoiselle has made the conquest of an old man who will do anything to spend with her the few days he has to live. She must make the best bargain she can, and he, Bourdon, will help her. The terms which he persuades them will be so greatly to her advantage will be, instead of asking for a dowry, to stipulate that after Teissier's death one half of his property shall go to her.

Not perceiving that Marie could not receive less, even if she made no bargain whatever, Mme. Vigneron replies with severity that M. Bourdon instead of promising M. Teissier's fortune to her daughter would have done better to have kept her father's fortune for her.

Bourdon observes that she is always harping on that. What he is thinking of is what mademoiselle might object to, and he can think of nothing. She must understand that there is no such thing as love. He has never met any for his part. There is only business in this world; marriage is a business like any other; the business which presents itself to her to-day she will never meet again.

Marie. During the conversations he had with you did M. Teissier speak of my family?

Bour. Of your family? No. [*In a low voice.*] Do they demand anything?

Marie. M. Teissier ought to know that I would never consent to part from them.

Bour. Why should he part you from them? Your sisters are charming, your mother is a very agreeable person. Besides, it is entirely to Teissier's interest not to leave alone a young woman who will have many idle moments. Now, mademoiselle, prepare for what I have to tell you. Teissier accompanied me here; he is downstairs; he is waiting for an answer which, this time, must be

final; you would run a great risk if you were to delay it. Hence, I ask you: Yes or no?

Mme. V. That is enough, M. Bourdon. I was willing that you should inform my daughter of the proposition which was made to her, but if she is to accept it, it concerns her, and I do not intend that she should do so in a moment of weakness or emotion.

In conclusion, Mme. Vigneron says that she has not a hearty and healthy girl of twenty to give to an old man. He exclaims that any one would think she had her pockets full of sons-in-law. It seems to him that mademoiselle would do well to sacrifice a few years for her family. With tears in her eyes, Marie says he may tell M. Teissier that she accepts. Bourdon goes to get his client.

Marie assures her mother that Bourdon is right: the marriage is salvation. It is not possible for her mother to begin a life of misery and privations. Blanche cannot be asked to be courageous. And then there is Judith. Who knows what might become of a young girl, the best and purest of them, when her mind is active and she is not afraid of adventures. Marie says that she feels relieved now that the marriage is decided upon. It will be what it may, blameworthy, mercenary, very painful also, but she prefers a little shame and sorrow that she knows to worries of all sorts which may end in misfortune. She tells her mother to wipe her eyes and not let them see that they have wept.

Bourdon enters, followed by Teissier, who goes smiling toward Marie. Bourdon stops him and motions to him to greet Mme. Vigneron first. Assured that Marie is not going to change her mind, Teissier says the wedding will take place in three weeks.

Rosalie tells them that Dupuis, the furniture dealer, is there with a bill. Mme. Vigneron says to send him away, that they owe him nothing, but Teissier tells her to have the man in and settle the question. He suggests leaving Marie to deal with Dupuis, and goes behind the door to listen.

Dupuis enters. At first he tries politeness, but when he finds that Marie asserts firmly that they owe him nothing he says he is grieved. Then he warns her that he will become angry. He declares they owe him two thousand

francs, and tells Marie to have her mother give him her note for it. She repeats that he is making a mistake.

Dupuis. Well, mademoiselle, I shall not leave this house until I get it. I presented myself politely, hat in hand. [*He puts on his hat.*] You seem to treat me like a thief; that does not go with me. Go and get your mother; let her give me two thousand francs or a note. I am still willing to take a note. Otherwise, M. Dupuis will get raging mad, and make the whole house shake.

Enter TEISSIER. DUPUIS, *surprised and already intimidated by his arrival, removes his hat.*

Teis. Keep your hat on. No ceremony in business. You have your bill with you?

Teissier says he is going to pay the bill and then verify it afterward. Dupuis tells him to verify the bill first. It is possible that his wife made a mistake. Teissier replies that his wife has nothing to do with the matter. It is he who is liable by asking for the same amount twice. Dupuis declares he would not ask for the money if it were not due, but when Teissier offers him the cash he will not take it.

Teis. Go back home, my man, and don't let me ever catch you here again; you hear me?

Dup. What's that, Monsieur?

Teis. I am telling you to go home. Don't be insolent; you would regret it.

Dup. Give me back my bill at least.

Teis. Take care you do not find it in the State's Attorney's office.

Dup. Ah! that's too much. A man whom I do not know dares to speak to me like that, to my very face. I am going, mademoiselle; you'll hear of me soon.

[*Exit, putting on his hat.*

Teis. You have been surrounded by rascals ever since the death of your father, my child. Let us join your family.

THE PRINCE D'AUREC*

By Henry Lavedan

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on June 1, 1892.

Argument: The Prince d'Aurec, a frivolous aristocrat who believes that any serious occupation in life is unworthy of his position, has just lost 400,000 francs at cards, and in addition to his other obligations, his wife owes 200,000 francs to her dressmaker. His mother, who has paid his debts three times, refuses to make another sacrifice, but a Jewish banker who is in love with his wife lends the money. Will the banker succeed in exacting the compensation he desires, or will the Prince find some means of rescue in his extremity?

The hotel of the Prince d'Aurec is an old mansion in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. In one of the drawing-rooms, furnished in the style of Louis XIV, is a magnificent portrait of that magnificent monarch. Two servants in livery are parleying with a creditor who has worked himself into a pet over the way he has been trifled with for the past year by the Prince and his household. One of the servants says it is not at all reasonable to talk about money when they are to have a fancy-dress ball that evening and have no time to think of anything else. Fifteen hundred invitations have been sent out. The whole aristocracy will be present. As soon as the creditor has gone, the steward comes in. He is being harried by a host of tradespeople who have been stirred up like hornets by the news of the ball. He fears that he shall be obliged to in-

*From "Three Modern Plays from the French," (Lemaitre's, "The Pardon," Lavedan's, "The Prince d'Aurec," Donnay's, "The Other Danger.") trans. and edited by Barrett H. Clarke and Charlotte Tenney David, Henry Holt & Co., New York, $1.50.

form the Prince's mother, the Duchess de Talais, of the situation.

The Princess d'Aurec is in the drawing-room when the Prince enters. He has just been engaging in one of his most important pursuits, driving a coach from "Robinson's," which is a fashionable restaurant near Paris. When he says that he is very much troubled she thinks at first that he has run into something, but he tells her that it is about "a little money" that he lost the night before at the club.

Princess. How much?

Prince. Four hundred.

Princess. Thousand?

Prince. Of course! Not four hundred francs!

Princess. My congratulations, dear.

Prince. Don't mention it.

Princess. Well, I think you might have chosen a better time to lose so much!

Prince. Why?

Princess. Because I myself am very short for the time being, and I was just about to ask you for a rather large sum.

Prince. Ah, this is just the day!

Princess. I suppose my demand is very *mal à propos!*

Prince. It is; I am sorry. Now you understand how impossible it is for me to help you.—What's the trouble? Dressmakers? They can wait.

Princess. Never mind, let's not speak about it. Tell me, who won all that from you?

Prince. The Prince of Suabia.

Princess. It is a very expensive luxury to play with a Crown Prince!

Prince. Twenty thousand louis! It is a good deal. So you are not surprised to see me a little nervous?

Princess. Nervous? You seem to me astonishingly calm.

Prince. I drove my coach as usual this morning, for after all—*noblesse oblige!* It was rather pleasant, the horses were well in hand; no sun, no dust: perfect English weather! Only, I'm rather tired from loss of sleep—and the ball this evening seems rather too much.

Princess. At least you'll not play to-night.

Prince. No, worse luck. I might have recouped myself.

Princess. At this rate, you will ruin us altogether! Then how will you live? Will you be a coachman, or give lessons on the horn?

Prince. That might pay me better than being a Bachelor of Science, like my steward Bertin.

Princess. Let us count up your dead; in three years, since our marriage, you have already consumed two uncles——

Prince. My grandfather, my aunt, the Canoness——

Princess. And one alive: me!

Prince. That's true.

Princess. But I shan't blame you for squandering my dowry; I despise money.

Prince. So do I!

Princess. But really it is high time you stopped, because I know some one who will make you if you don't.

Prince. Who?

Princess. Your mother.

Prince. Oh, the poor Duchess! She will give me whatever I want.

Princess. Do you believe that?

Prince. She's already let me have quite a fortune!

Princess. Do you intend to turn to her for the four hundred thousand?

Prince. I do: to-morrow.

Princess. And do you think she will give them to you?

Prince. I do: she adores me.

Princess. That is no valid reason.

Prince. You fail to do justice to my mother; you misjudge her.

Princess [*ironically*]. Heaven keep me from that! [*She laughs.*]

Prince. I know what you think about her: she lacks distinction.

Princess. You agree to that?

Prince. Well—she is not of our class. It is all very well for her to believe that her blood is as good as yours or mine simply because my father made her a duchess. She is a Piédoux, my dear, daughter of the famous manufacturer of automatic churns, Aristide Piédoux——

The Prince says that his mother is obstinate, determined, prejudiced, but that she simply cannot resist him, and in preventing her husband from spending all her money she was a provident, far-seeing mother. He can see no other way out of his difficulty except by making his mother disgorge, for the Prince of Suabia must be paid in twenty-four hours. If the worst came to the worst he might sell the famous sword of his forefather the Constable. Chambersac has offered him 130,000 francs for it. But that would not help much. Then there is De Horn, the millionaire banker. The Prince has nothing against Jews, but is afraid that De Horn would take advantage of him as his creditor, having already proposed that they should go into partnership in some shooting grounds, and that the Prince should introduce him at the club.

Prince. As I am firmly decided not to do either of these things, no matter how amiable the Baron is, I shall not put myself under any obligation to him.

Princess. You are perfectly right.

Prince. To go back to what I was saying, I have thought of everything, but my mother is the only practicable solution. She has paid my debts three times already, and she will pay them a fourth.

Princess. Very possibly.

When Baron de Horn comes to the house the Princess says she wishes to speak to him about some Turkish bonds, thus sending Montade, the novelist, to the other end of the room, and informs De Horn that once more she must take advantage of his friendly offer. He takes a check-book from his pocket and makes out and signs a blank check. Taking the check-book, she says, "What confidence I have in you," and goes out quickly. Montade rejoins De Horn and inquires how he is coming on—with those Turkish bonds. Being a psychologist, he is not blind. If De Horn will not be angry he will explain what it is that he is not blind to.

Montade. I am a celebrity, I am invited out as a matter of course. But it is not a matter of course that a man like you—who comes of an eminently practical race—should have private conversations with a woman like the Princess, and take out of his pocket a little volume that resembles a check-book! [*Negative gesture from* DE HORN.] There

must be something behind all this when the Baron de Horn, one of our most hard-headed millionaires, a leader, although young, among the Hebrew financiers, lets himself in for such elegant and refined little chats before dinner!

De Horn. Well?

Mont. And as that something else is one of the most charming and desirable little women in Paris, why, my dear fellow, I wish you all the luck in the world!

De H. I assure you——

Mont. Oh, no, no, no—don't explain! Only, I don't know just why: I should be careful about the Prince and Princess. [*The* BARON *pays strict attention to these words.*] I have an idea that this family's intentions in regard to you are not of the most disinterested, and you are running the risk of being fooled if you don't play your cards with extreme care——

De H. I have never yet been fooled!

Mont. You and I are not what might be termed close friends, but in the interest of psychology I think I ought to warn you of possible danger. Now, let's say nothing more about it!

De H. You are very kind! But you may rest assured I shall never be fooled by these people, Monsieur Novelist. I know them too well for that!

Mont. Not as well as I. They don't love us!

De H. They despise us; me for my money, you for your ability. These people are our born enemies; no peace is possible between us. They tolerate us, but never for an instant do they admit us to be their equals. We are a race apart; the same blood does not flow in our veins.

Mont. We are like higher servants to them. I am happy to see that we can converse on a basis of mutual understanding. But if they despise us—and they do—why do they receive us in their circle?

De H. First, because we force our way, but, above all, because they are afraid of us. They are afraid of us as they are afraid of what is unknown, of the future. I inspire fear by reason of the millions I have in my pocket, you by the qualities you have in your mind. You see, the impudence of their affected courtesy, the carefully guarded degree to which they extend their friendship, their attitude of patronage, their formal manner of shaking hands—it all

shows that they can never pardon us for obliging them to accept us. It is sometimes said that their *hauteur* is only a form of timidity, their rudeness, absent-mindedness. Well, I shall believe that when I have once seen them amiably absent-minded! What are they good for nowadays? What do they care for art, literature, science? They support nothing but horse-racing and horse-shows. If they were able they would put a stop to everything. They are useless, vain, frivolous, irritable: they form a totally artificial and isolated class in the society of to-day: luxurious and rotten to the core! They now quietly decompose amid the splendor and show of their past. To-morrow they will have ceased to exist!

Mont. Far be it from me to defend them! I don't want to, nor am I bound to, but really, between you and me, you exaggerate. There are among them, if you know where to look, people who still possess the old-fashioned honor and fidelity.

De H. Very possibly: in the provinces!

De Horn maintains that as a whole the aristocracy of to-day is in the last stages of decay.

Mont. It is a great satisfaction to me to know that seven hundred years ago my ancestors went about in rags, barefooted, scratching the arid soil of the Middle Ages, while I, the descendant of those outcasts, may hold my head high, and can write my thoughts and have them printed!

De H. And my ancestors seven hundred years ago! Worse than outcasts! They lived in filth, the objects of fierce hatred; they were driven out of the towns at the sword's point like lepers! A Jewess who was enceinte and had to cross a bridge paid the same toll as swine. But the times have changed, and now *we* are the kings: we are the true aristocrats. They—ha!—they are appropriately called descendants! As we rise, they sink! Proofs? Everywhere! There, on the table! [*He picks up a book at hazard.*] "Rules of the Game of Poker."

Mont. [*picking up another book*]. "Thirty Calls on the Horn," collected by the Baron de X. . . .

De H. [*taking another*]. "The Mail-coach in Paris." And in this house, what do we find? A Prince aged thirty-four, good for nothing on earth——

Mont. Capable of everything——

De H. A perverted mind, heart and feelings like dry tobacco. There's the Princess, a pretty doll, to whom you may say anything, but to whom I happen to be making love, with the certitude, I admit, of her being mine! What else? Jojo, the cousin from the provinces, the grandson of a Chouan——

Mont. Let's say nothing more about them!

The Duchess de Talais enters with a number of other persons, and they discuss the costumes that they are going to wear at the ball. The Viscount de Montrejeau, "Jojo," the Princess's cousin from Nantes, who has come especially to conduct the Pavane, thought at first of appearing as a Chouan with hat and cockade, representing his grandfather's last heroic days, but he feared it might be too painful, and is coming as the Duke d'Epernon. As the company pass out to dinner De Horn stands aside and looks at the check-book, which the Princess has returned to him. He raises his eyebrows, saying to himself, "Two hundred thousand! I begin to have hope!" The Duchess starts to observe that, "The day the king comes riding into Paris ——" but the Prince interrupting, concludes, "He will soon be on foot again!"

The folding doors at the back of the Louis XIV drawing-room open on a balcony that overlooks the ballroom, so that it is easy to see when the guests begin to arrive. The Princess is dressed in the costume of Marion Delorme, and the Prince has on a suit of armor that belonged to the Constable, Guzman d'Aurec, with the famous sword at his side. For the last time Montrejeau is putting his eight couples through the steps of the Pavane. De Horn enters in the costume of an Indian Rajah, sparkling with diamonds worth three million francs.

Princess [*to the* BARON]. Your entrance somehow lacked effect; a rajah like you should have come on an elephant.

Mlle. de Saint-Patrice. A white one.

De H. I left him in the cloakroom.

Montrejeau [*going out with* DE GANCAY]. Too much jewelry!

M. de Bertamont. Are you sure his teeth aren't set with diamonds?

The Princess has a chance to thank De Horn, and giving him her hand she tells him that he acted as tactfully as a great lord.

Princess. But I always insist on paying my debts: in a year's time I shall no longer be your debtor.

De H. I regret it.

Princess. Oh! [*Delicately.*] Notice that I did not say I should not be infinitely obliged to you!

De H. Those words are worth all the money I have loaned you. But really I am your debtor, yours and the Prince's, especially yours!

In the past two years, De Horn says, he has risen considerably in the world, the Prince and Princess having opened to him doors through which he would never have have been able to pass without their assistance. Before he knew them he was an ordinary banker. To-day he appears before the world as an aristocrat.

Princess. You have been of great service to me. I shall never forget.

De H. Never?

Princess. Do you want me to say it again?

De H. Never is a great deal. I don't ask that much. I ask you to remember it—some day!

Princess. What day?

De H. I shall tell you.

The Princess begins to fear that she has been too grateful. She tells him that if he wishes their relations to continue he must swear by what he holds most dear, his diamonds, not to make love to her.

De H. I don't swear it. I want immediately what is denied me. For that reason I have sworn never to go into a museum. The moment I see a sign "do not touch!" I do touch!

Princess. But this isn't a museum!

De H. That is so, yet I can't help thinking I'm at the Louvre.

She finds that he has changed a great deal in his manner in the last few minutes.

De H. I am speaking to Marion!

Princess. Then I understand. Well, take care that Marion doesn't take offence at what is said to the Princess d'Aurec!

De H. I have no fear. The Princess d'Aurec belongs to the Rajah!

The Prince comes in. He is somewhat incommoded by his armor and says that he could not go bicycle-riding, but that he could manage to cut the cards. The Duchess enters dressed as Madame de Maintenon, with a high coiffure covered with lace. Her face is very set and stern as she goes to her son and says that she must see him at once. As soon as they are alone she informs him that she knows all: the 400,000 francs he lost the night before, the condition the house is in, all the money he owes, everything. The Prince expostulates that this is no time to bring up such a matter, when he has the Constable's helmet on and is about to receive the guests. She will not be put off, so he says, "Come at once to the deluge!"

Duchess. What do you mean?

Prince. Nothing.

Duchess. Probably something impertinent! But I'm used to you. When I married, at the age of nineteen, I had a large fortune. The day I lost your poor father you were very young, you never knew in what a state his affairs were! My dowry I arranged so that my husband might use it, in spite of my family's objections——

Prince. This is really a very painful subject to me. Don't talk about it!

Duchess. Not as painful as it is to me. Of a dowry of fifteen millions, only three remain.

Prince. That's a very fair sum!

Duchess. With the remaining three millions——

Prince. Yes, I know everything: acting on the advice of M. Sorbier, a lawyer and friend of your father's, you placed me in a boarding-school at Angers, you yourself lived not far away, at Récigny, and there by means of strict economy you were enabled to mend the family fortunes a little——

Duchess. During twelve years, and by all sorts of privations.

Prince. Well? What about it?

Duchess. Listen, and you will know. You thought fit to remain idle while you were supposed to be studying, you couldn't even pass your first degree while ordinary farmers' sons——

Prince. I beg your pardon: I passed the written examination.[1]

Duchess. And were refused three times in the oral. When you left college you lived the life of most young men, did nothing from the age of eighteen to thirty, and cost me eleven hundred thousand francs!

Prince. Now——

Duchess. Not a sou less: I have the accounts in my books. At thirty, thanks to me, you met the grand-niece of the Duke de Richelieu, Thérèse de Varaucourt, whom you married. It was a superb match! I thought at that time you would settle down! Nothing of the sort: you gambled as before, every single night, and in two years' time and less you have squandered your wife's dowry and your own personal fortune of a hundred thousand francs a year! Then after you had lost all your own money you begged me for more, making all sorts of fine promises —"I promise you never to touch another card!" I was foolish enough to believe you; for the third time I paid your debts, and for the third time you ruined yourself. Now you owe money to usurers, upholsterers, coachmakers, florists, bakers, and butchers!

Prince. Let us leave these tradespeople out of the discussion!

Duchess. You owe more than two hundred thousand francs, and last night at the Jockey Club you lost four hundred thousand to the Prince of Suabia. You're in a pretty situation! Well, take my word for it, I'm done with you! You need expect nothing further from me; I shall not pay a single sou!

Prince. Not a single sou; good! Is that all? I should like to dance! [*He starts to go.*]

Duchess [*calling him back*]. Dominique!

Prince. Yes?

Duchess. What else have you to say to me?

Prince. What else can I say? You are absolutely right; if I were in your place, I should do precisely as you are doing. [*Again he starts to go.*]

Duchess. My poor boy, what can you do?

Prince. I know!

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[1] A written examination must first be passed, then an oral.

He tells her to have no fear, that he will see to his debts. But she insists that she has a right to know how he will do so, and exhorts him to remember that the blood of the Talais runs in his veins, to live a life more worthy of his title, of the glorious past which his ancestors have left him, and which he is disgracing. He replies that he cannot bring back the days of the Crusades, that the epoch of heroism is past. She replies that a man works when he is in such a dangerous situation. He retorts that the Prince of Suabia owes fifty millions. She interrupts him at the worst possible moment, he says, to talk about the past, the present, and the future, his father, himself, everything, and blames him seventeen years afterward for having failed in his examination. She answers that she merely wanted to remind him of all that she had done for him.

Prince. You had no need to tell me that. Every time you pay my debts I have thanked you. We're even!

Duchess. A child never ceases to owe its parents!

Prince. So I see. You are a very hard creditor! You take advantage of me to criticise every act of mine, my tastes, what I do, how I live! I like cards, horses, luxury, and money! What of it? Fearful crime! I am a gentleman; and I do no more nor less than others to maintain my dignity as such.

Duchess. That isn't enough. When a man has the honor to bear your name——

Prince. Devil take my name! You'll make me sick of it before long! Sometimes I wish my name were Dubois or Morin; then I shouldn't have to listen to all this twaddle. It seems I can't be noble enough for you, who were born in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, and whose father was a churn manufacturer!

Duchess. He was an honest man!

Prince. Oh! We have our names—no credit to us!

Duchess. No, your names have you—they support you!

Prince. Tell me what good they are! They're nice to use in restaurants. The French aristocracy is seen on every menu card in Paris:—There's a certain kind of lamb that's named after me! When, I ask, when will you keep up with the times, and stop pestering me with

your worm-eaten conventions of the aristocratic *faubourg!* The Monarchy has fallen years ago; it hasn't existed since the Revolution! Lace collars and red heels and sedan chairs are things of the past! And we, the nobility, called the privileged class even since we lost our privileges, are dead! If not forever, for a good long time! To-day everything is changed——

Duchess. There is going to be war, anarchy, a second Terror!

Prince. Possibly: I don't know. What is sure is that we are not going back to the age of Saint-Louis. To-day we don't believe in the nobility. You may have your king, if you like, but I defy you to consecrate him! Every one would laugh at you!

Duchess. Be silent, my son! You may if you will be of your time, but don't ask me to join you. To-morrow I am going to have trustees appointed to regulate your affairs and your income.

Prince. Would you do that?

Duchess. Yes; you have been troublesome enough to me.

Prince. And to myself!

Duchess. Ah! If you ever have to sell this house, remember that my estate at Récigny and my house in the Rue de Varenne are at the disposal of you and your wife.

Prince. Never! I'd rather give riding-lessons!

Duchess. Just as you please.

Prince. Is that all you have to say?

Duchess. Yes.

Prince. Then I shan't need your assistance: I shall sell everything I have to the highest bidder, and—I'm going to sell the sword!

Duchess. No! You wouldn't have the heart——!

Prince. You'll see! "For sale: a magnificent sword, unique specimen." And then you talk of trustees——

Duchess. Dominique, please——

Prince. Very well, then, pay.

Duchess. Oh, you wanted to force me to——! You attacked me on my weakest side—the Piédoux side! Your scheme won't work this time, my child! I told you I wouldn't pay a sou, and not a sou will I pay! Sell whatever you like—sword and all. I shall be bitterly disappointed, but I shan't be sorry for you. The sword will be

in better hands than yours, wherever it goes. You're no son of mine, you're no true nobleman!

They are interrupted by the entrance of De Horn, who informs them that the guests are arriving. The Duchess goes to the balcony, and De Horn asks the Prince what is the matter. When he says that his mother is threatening him with trustees, and that he must have 400,000 francs the next day, De Horn begs him not to worry about it, as he knows where the money can be had.

Although the Prince was enabled to pay his debts by borrowing from De Horn, he was forced soon after to sell his house, his horses, and even the famous sword, and come to live at the country château of his mother in Anjou. And the Duchess has made good her threat about having his estate placed in the control of a trustee. De Horn and Montade are again guests of the Prince, and the novelist reminds the banker of his warning three months before to look out lest he get fooled. He does not believe that De Horn has made the slightest progress in the favor of the Princess since she asked his advice about the Turkish bonds, and he knows that the Prince has not even proposed De Horn at the Jockey Club. De Horn is not at all impatient, but he soon learns that he must act quickly to recoupe an indemnity.

The Prince is royally bored, but he is resigned and is waiting for better days. To kill time he has decided to go to Hungary with the Princess to visit some of her relatives for several months. This is more than De Horn had reckoned on, and he decides to burn his bridges behind him and proceed to the attack.

The poor Duchess is still striving to arouse her son's ambition. She believes he might make himself anything he likes. If he will go into politics she will finance the campaign. She conceives that a Deputy might govern very well without knowing anything about his own private affairs, and that he can rise to be Speaker, Minister, Ambassador.

Princess. Sultan!

Duchess. There is nothing you can't be!

Prince. A Prince d'Aurec ought not to hold office under the present administration.

Princess [*to the* DUCHESS]. Just what you've said a hundred times!

The Duchess considers that it would be a fine thing for her son to get into the Academy; the green coat would be very becoming to him. To be sure, he has written nothing, but she suggests that he copy something out of his ancestors' correspondence; he could write a beautiful book, as good as another. If he will not do that he must decide on some profession. Sorbier, an old friend of the Duchess, says that the aristocracy must learn to work like ordinary mortals, unless they want to disappear from the face of the earth.

Prince. But the times are not yet ripe for the reforms M. Sorbier speaks of. I want to hear nothing more about my entering a profession. I have one now.

Duchess. Laziness!

Prince. Precisely: I am a gentleman!

Duchess. That's not much.

Prince. I think it is. To set a standard in taste, invent a new clever saying, a perfume, a shade, set in circulation a new cravat, a distinctive hat, find a new method of riding, make vice as attractive as the ridicule of virtue. That is the only occupation worthy of a gentleman nowadays.

After this conversation the Prince goes out for a walk to recuperate. The Duchess reminds Sorbier of her life when she was a girl of eighteen, when he used to come and have supper with them on Sunday nights.

Duchess. When any one mentioned any of the famous heroes of French history in my presence, whenever I read about the deeds of old, my heart beat at a terrible rate! The nobles! In my eyes they were something high above us, something apart, by reason of their better deeds and thoughts and aspirations! They were for me the essence of the good qualities of the whole race. This superior race was in duty bound to carry on the traditions of the past; each member was part of a long line of ancestors, and it was his sole object in life to hand down intact to his son the unstained family name. I said to myself: "If by any chance I ever make a place for myself in that closed caste, I, Virginie Piédoux, will do my best to honor it."—What a dream! The dream came true, I do belong to the

class, and now I know it is less important than my own. I'm punished!

Sorbier. Come, now——!

Duchess. I have suffered enough because of the nobility! I brought it my money and my *bourgeois* virtues, it brought me its hereditary vices and its soiled 'scutcheon! I got no happiness out of it, from my husband or my son. There are times even when I am glad I am not a grandmother; a grandson would have had too many chances to inherit his father's vices—that's another of the disillusions of my old age! My last days aren't happy!

Sor. Nonsense——

Duchess. No, they aren't. When I think of the different life I might have lived if I had not been so obstinate and blind—oh, the marriages I have refused!

Sor. [*pensively*]. Yes!

Duchess. I have regretted a hundred times——!

Sor. [*ill at ease*]. Please!

Duchess. Why not speak of it? It will make my life easier for a little! I am so sorry I refused you when you asked for my hand—from my father—thirty-five years ago!

Sor. Thirty-six.

Duchess. How old we're getting!

The Duchess goes out with Sorbier. De Horn picks up a photograph of the Princess. Fiction may satisfy Montade, he thinks, but it does not suffice for him. The Princess enters and looks at him. She tells him to put back the picture.

Princess. Let us keep our distance.

De H. I want to bring us closer together.

Princess. You are wasting your time.

De H. So that we may come closer afterward! . . . You see, don't you, that I have a confession to make?

Princess. And you are put out because I don't ask you what? I'm not in the least curious.

De H. So much the worse: I am indiscreet—I love you!

Princess. Is it worth while to ring for a servant?

De H. I love you deeply, with all my power, with all my heart!

Princess. Of course!

De H. Up to now I have been treated as an inti-

mate friend of the family, I have been shown special consideration——

Princess. And therefore you conclude "That little Princess—mm.—ah! One of these days I'll have only to open my arms and she will fall into them!" Well, Monsieur, you have aimed a little too high!

De H. Madame, you would not be the first great lady who has stooped!

Princess. That is very true, but when we do stoop, we choose!

De H. And if I am so low that you please to make me feel my position, who can blame me if I aspire to you? What finer ambition could I have? I'm a millionaire, *blasé*, hard to please! There is nothing in the world but you to desire! I have everything!

Princess. Except——

De H. Except everything! You!! And I feel as if I had nothing!

Princess. Surely you exaggerate!

De H. You are all I have ever wanted, dreamed of!

Princess. Most flattered, I'm sure!

De H. I think it is a punishment for all my wealth that I should love a woman who scorns and despises me! I must be terribly in love with you, your qualities, and your race——

Princess. Everything that you haven't!

De H. I know it; and that is why I love you. I don't need you to tell me that you are a superior being; I am the first to admit it. It is the only thing I have ever been forced to admit. If I hadn't been born what I am, I should have liked to belong to your class!

De Horn says that the Prince has ruined her, that she has a kingdom to rule over in Paris, and that he will give it to her.

Princess. Suggest that to him!

De H. Little he thinks of you! Mademoiselle de Varaucourt, descendant of Richelieu, has now been reduced to the position of wife of a bankrupt country squire! Pretty, isn't it? I have more pride in you than he has, I think more of your social prestige than your husband! With me at least money would flow again in the house he has raided and despoiled; you can spend what you like: you will

always have plenty. There'll not be enough room in the house to keep it all! Come with me and let me reëstablish you where you belong! Be a princess again, and not what you now are!

Princess. That will do!

De H. No, that will not do! You know life well enough to realize that that will not do—in these times!

Princess. I insist, Monsieur! And the proof is that I ask you to leave immediately! Go away and don't come back. I don't want to see you again!

He reminds her of his services. She says that her husband will repay him.

De H. Are you going to tell him?

Princess. Within five minutes.

De H. Will you tell him that I have bought your clothes for you?

Princess. Yes, Monsieur.

De H. He will be delighted!

Princess. I can't say as much for you!

De H. Oh, I have nothing to fear from him. How about you?

Princess. He will understand me; we are equals.

De H. You *are*—equals!

Princess. Insolent Jew!

Enter the PRINCE, *hearing the* PRINCESS's *last words.*

Prince. What's the matter?

Princess. Monsieur has just asked me to become his mistress.

Prince. Indeed!

Princess. I offered a few objections, and then he said something about having rendered us some services. Ask him, he will give you all the necessary details.

[*She goes out.*

De Horn stands his ground composedly, and when the Prince tells him to leave, says he is still there, and moreover that he is good enough to fight a duel with any one.

Prince. I'm sorry, but I'm not "any one." I have honored you by my company, I have received you as an intimate friend in my family, you have made free with us and our acquaintances, patronized the same tailor as I, until you have forgotten that a great gulf separates us! I have even shown myself in public with you, I have ridden

with you in your own carriages, and now you talk about your damned money——

De H. I well recall how you swooped down on that damned money!

De Horn informs the Prince that he is not going to put up with his impudence, and that he is not afraid of his threats. He may think he can caress and flatter him, empty his purse whenever he likes, and then throw him aside like a worn-out coat, but this time he is mistaken. He tells the Prince that the Princess owes him 300,000 francs. The moment they seek to discharge him like a servant, he asks for his wages.

De H. Have you seven hundred thousand francs? No. I shall not leave until I have my money.

Prince [*white with anger, as he raises his arm*]. You——!! Take care, or I'll——!

De H. Violence will not pay your debts, Monsieur. I have taken precautions, and I hold the reins tight in my hands. There is no use becoming excited. Get my money for me. I'll wait.

The Prince stands mute with rage and impotence. He walks back and forth twisting his moustache, casting side-long glances at De Horn. He rings the bell, and a servant enters a moment later. He lets the servant go, and then rings again and sends for his mother. He also asks for the Princess, M. Sorbier, and M. Montade.

De H. Every one?

Prince. Every one.

De H. A pleasure party!

Prince. Or an execution.

The Duchess, the Princess, Sorbier, and Montade come in.

Prince. Mother——

Duchess. Never mind: Thérèse has told me everything. [*To* De Horn.] Monsieur, if you will be good enough to go to your room, you will find your baggage packed. M. Bertin, who has received instructions from me, is waiting for you below. He will take the same train as you do, the Paris express, leaving at five fifty-eight. To-morrow morning you will be paid.

De H. Very well.

[*He stays for a moment, as if about to say something.*]

Sor. [*approaching him*]. I advise you to go, Monsieur, you have nothing more to do here.

De H. [*going*]. Oh, by the way, the Constable's sword is in my collection!

[*The* PRINCE *is about to follow him, but his mother prevents him with a gesture.*]

Duchess. Dominique!

[DE HORN *goes out in silence. The* PRINCE *sits down, angry and disgusted, his head in his hands. He bursts into sobs.*]

Mont. [*in an undertone*]. Nervous let-down.

Sor. [*aside to the* DUCHESS]. He is yours now; strike while the iron is hot.

Princess [*to her husband*]. Thank your mother! She deserves it!

Duchess [*going to the* PRINCE]. Are you satisfied with me? Was I really the Duchess de Talais?

Prince. Yes. *You* are noble, not I.

Duchess. When will *you* be?

Prince. I shall never be the man you want me to be! To-day I can only promise you one thing: to live the life of an honest man, and when the time comes, to die like a prince.

Duchess. War? Will you give up your life in war?

Mont. [*suavely polite*]. As would any of us.

Prince [*drawing himself up to his full height, and with conscious pride*]. There is a certain way of doing it——!

FOR THE CROWN

By François Coppée

First played in Paris at the Théâtre de l'Odéon on January 19, 1895.

Argument: Michael Brancomir, who for twelve years has defended the Balkan passes against the Turks, is incensed at not being elected king and conspires to obtain the crown by becoming an ally of the Sultan. His son Constantine, discovering the plot and failing to dissuade him, slays him in combat. Will Constantine, accused as a traitor, clear himself by confessing his father's guilt, or will he suffer martyrdom?

Before the gateway of a fifteenth century stronghold in the Balkans two soldiers are talking of the evil times. Benko, a secret agent of the Turks, disguised as a wandering minstrel, listens to their conversation. They say that fearful portents are reported by travellers; at Prague in Bohemia a portrait of the Virgin was seen to turn pale, and in Poland the wayside crucifixes have bled from their five wounds.

Michael Brancomir enters with Bazilide, a Greek princess of fascinating beauty, who is his second wife. He is expecting word from the Diet, which is in session at Widdin, that he has been elected king in recognition of his services in defending the country successfully against the Turks for many years. His son Constantine has just defeated the Turks in a skirmish and enters accompanied by soldiers.

It is against Michael's orders to give quarter to the enemy, and he tells Constantine that two prisoners whom he has brought with him must be put to death. Constantine acquiesces in the case of one of the prisoners, but claims the other, a gypsy girl named Militza, as booty.

Then he offers the girl her liberty and a well-filled purse. She begs him, however, to let her remain with him as his servant; and on his consenting, asks him to give her a poniard from his belt as a pledge that he will keep his word. She says she will kill herself with it if he dies.

Soldiers enter. With them is Ourosch, a grizzled veteran.

Ourosch. Good news for every Christian soul!
The Diet names the Bishop Stephen, king! [*The soldiers cheer.*]
Constantine [*aside*]. My father!
Ourosch. And the king, scarce crowned,
Has come here to the camp to bring his blessing.
[*Shouts are heard at a little distance.*]
'Tis he . . . You hear . . .
Michael [*in a low voice to* BAZILIDE]. And so the thing is done!
He comes here close upon my envoy's heels;
In triumph comes to give offence to me!
I'm stifled! Ha! I think my veins will burst.
Bazilide. We shall take vengeance. I pray you to be calm.
[*At this moment the* BISHOP-KING, *wearing the crown over his mitre and holding a cross of white wood, enters at the rear followed by an escort of boyars.*]
Mich. [*aside*]. 'Tis he!
Soldiers. Long live the king!
King. Peace be with you!
Prince Michael, and thou, Constantine, all of you,
Christian soldiers, blessed be you all
In the name of the Trinity.
All. So be it!
King. War has made Brancomir the first among us;
He more than I deserves the kingly crown;
And yet they give it me, who ask it not.
But I must needs obey the people's voice,
Who in their wisdom wish their mighty chief,
The shield of Christian Europe and our land,
To carry to the end his warlike task,
And choose an aged man whose ardent prayer
Is ever for his country. The will of God

Be done! I shall obey, and I accept
The duty rather than the place and title.
But having on my brow the crown and mitre,
Oh valiant Brancomir, I come to you
To give the kiss paternal of your king.
Brief will be my reign, for night is near;
Beneath my throne I sense the empty tomb.
More conqueror you, when I am dead, will be,
And king at last of your delivered country.
Until then, Brancomir, in heart and thought
Be we united for the work begun,
The holy work, with unabating zeal;
And so it may be known that no ill-will
Doth rankle in your breast, embrace your king,
And kneel before the presence of your priest.

Mich. [*aside*]. I bend the knee before this mountebank,
This hypocrite! . . . O! God! It were dishonor!

King. Come, I extend my arms, and do you wait?

Baz. [*low to* MICHAEL]. He is the master and you must obey.

[MICHAEL, *quelling his fury, approaches.* STEPHEN, *who embraces him; then he kneels before the bishop, who places both hands on his head.*]

Benko [*aside*]. I come in time. This man is ripe for treason.

King. I bid you now farewell, for I return
To Widdin, happy to have seen the hills,
The mighty Balkan rampart of the Faith,
And seek the altars where I pray for you,
Brancomir, champion of all Christendom!
No glory, friend, is equal to your own;
Beyond the mountain chain the horde is held
At bay, conquered, and with terror struck
By the sword sublime that glitters in your hand.

Soldiers. Long live the king!

Mich. You think our hearts united!
Hatred and malediction!

King [*raising his hand*]. Bless you all!

The great hall of the citadel is decorated in barbaric style. Oriental tapestries, skins of beasts, trophies and

standards taken from the Turks are hung on the walls. Bazilide is giving an audience to Benko, the pretended minstrel. He assures her that her husband may easily become king. He has only to do what other kings have done, become a vassal of the Sultan, allow the worshippers of Allah to reopen the mosques, and pay a tribute yearly. Benko has ready a firman to settle the compact.

Bazilide replies that it is no easy thing, notwithstanding Michael's ambition, to persuade such a rough soldier to act the part of a traitor. Benko places the firman in her hands. It is to the effect that whoever opens the mountain passes to the troops of the Sultan and becomes his ally shall be crowned king. Only the seal of Brancomir is wanted to make the firman binding. But there must be no further delay. Benko proposes that Michael shall that very night take the place of the watchman on Trajan's road; that he shall fail to light the warning beacon, and that he shall meet the pasha Othorgul, who will come up with his troops and cross the mountain. Bazilide agrees to use all her power over her husband to make him accept.

When Bazilide and Benko have gone out, Constantine enters the hall and is followed by Militza, who warns him of a threatening danger. She tells him that the minstrel whom the haughty Bazilide favors is a Turk whom she has seen on the other side of the frontier in company with Othorgul. She is sure that Constantine's Greek stepmother is plotting with Benko.

Mil. Misfortune take me if it angers you—
Suspect them all, your father with the rest.
Cons. [*raising his hand furiously*]. My father! . . .
Miserable slave!
Mil. Strike me,
But believe your father would be king.
Cons. Militza!
Mil. When a dog finds peril near
And barks, the unjust man would strike. Well, strike!
It matters little if my blood is shed.
Let the dog die, if the master's life is saved.
Cons. My father! Horrible!
Mil. My heart beats fast.
May I die on a sudden if my instinct fails.

Most plainly have I seen that Brancomir
Exchanges with the stranger certain looks—
Shall I say the word?—of an accomplice.
Cons. Accomplice! . . . He! . . .
Mil. I hurt you. Yes, I know.
But then, reflect. Desire drives him ever;
Has he not grown as gloomy as the night
Since the white-haired bishop was chosen king?
Does he not long for vengeance at any price?
Ah, yes, but late his loyalty was a boast,
But Bazilide is there to tempt him on;
And subtle is the poison that is poured
In hours of love by woman so perverse.
Hatred in him effects its work obscure;
'Tis like a storm that blots the clearest sky.
His eyes betrayed it gathering slowly, mounting,
A whirlwind black of all his evil thoughts.
Cons. Be silent, for I know! I shudder at it.
An echo in me says that you are right . . .
Father! . . . 'Tis atrocious to suspect you! . . .
Mil. You know the danger, so deliberate.
The slave has told you all and now is silent.
Cons. Oh, God! I should go mad if this thing were!
And yet . . . My father . . . no, it cannot be—
That he would sell his country, soul, and God.
A traitor! After thirty years of honor!
I must know all at once! I must know all.

He may easily assure himself, Militza says, for Bazilide and Benko will seek a conference with his father as soon as he returns from the hunt, and Constantine may overhear by concealing himself behind the tapestry. He is loathe to play the spy, but for the country and for the faith he follows Militza's suggestion. Michael enters the hall accompanied by Bazilide and preceded and followed by huntsmen.

Michael laments that he has nothing better to war on than wild beasts. The huntsmen go out and Militza slips out with them. Bazilide thinks her lot worse than her husband's, for she was born in the purple, is accustomed to court life, and now has nothing to do but gaze at the snowy mountain summits. He replies that it was for

her that he so ardently desired the throne which intrigue gave to Stephen. The old man is only sixty, and it has been prophesied that he will live to be a hundred.

Mich. A hundred years! You'll need for that, old man,
A bosom that is proof against the poniard.
This dagger one fine day, drawn by this hand,
Shall, if I wish, make prophecy a liar.
I would do murder, and when I shall have struck,
There's no one shall usurp my throne again.

Baz. Thy fury and thy blasphemy are futile!
The entire people guard him. Your own soldiers
Know how to guard the bishop or avenge him.

She reminds him that there is a safer way of obtaining the throne, as she has told him many times before, but he resists her appeals to his ambition and love.

Baz. I wish it because I love you, Brancomir,
Because I know the bottom of your heart,
Because I know the secrets of your dreams.
At night you've tossed with fever and I've heard
Always the same word murmured by your lips.
Yes, this is what I wish and have prepared,
But only to bring happiness to you;
This dreadful life has lasted long enough
In which our ardent and suppressed desires
Cut like two knives, the one against the other,
Killing our love, destroying our affection.
Too much! One day the cup will overflow.
Beware then lest our love turn into hate . . .
When I should tear myself from your embrace! . . .
But that will never be, for you'll consent . . .
Do what I ask, Michael. Have faith in me;
And if the ambition be both crime and madness
Which gnaws our bosoms like a vulture's beak,
Commit the crime and let us save our love.
But wherefore speak of crime and its remorse?
You would but take the station which is yours.
You shall chastise this race, thankless as God.
What of a minaret beneath the sky,
The tribute, or another petty shame?
Some day you will cast out the host of Islam
And be acclaimed Saint Michael, and the Great;
And you shall be as famous as the Cæsars.

But know you what you want and what is offered?
The royal might and coffers filled with gold.
If still you feel your soul oppressed by scruples
Tell me, and you will see that I can die.

Mich. By heaven!

Baz. Michael, do you want a proof?
My woman's heart is stouter than your own.
Myself I'll strangle with my braided hair.

Mich. Enough! I do accept, comply and vow!
Lead on where'er you will and I will go.
I'm steeled for aught, for crime or sacrilege.
I'd build this throne for you though I were forced
To become the slave and satellite of Satan,
And with him, taking hammer, plane and saw,
To make it from the wood of Calvary's cross.

Baz. [*drawing him with her, and pointing imperiously toward the door of the gallery where the Sultan's emissary awaits them*]. Come!

Cons. [*coming out from his place of concealment in despair*]. I know my father is a traitor!

A sentry is at his post near the triumphal arch of Trajan, waiting to be relieved. Michael arrives, disguised, gives the password and takes the watchman's place. He is expecting the approach of the Turks when he is surprised by the appearance of Constantine.

Mich. What brings you here
In this vast solitude at such an hour?
Your mouth is quivering and your face is white.
What do you here?

Cons. What do you here, yourself?

Mich. Answer, and do not overstrain my patience.
What do you here?

Cons. My duty. I know all.

Mich. You know . . .

Cons. The Balkans will resound with arms;
The Turks are coming, and this beacon piled
Beside you is not kept by faithful guard.
To-night to save entire Christendom,
My father's honor and his soul as well,
In spite of you, I'll kindle it in flame.

Telling his father to spare himself the shame of falsehood, Constantine reveals how he overheard the plot. But he hopes now that he was somehow deceived, that he has had a horrible dream, has lost his reason, or that his father only pretended to Bazilide that he agreed. Michael disdains to make a response. He will remain there, he says, and Constantine must return to the castle. Constantine, reiterating that he will save his country from devastation and his father from shame, wishes to set the torch to the beacon and demands that Michael stand aside.

Mich. Never!

Cons. Father, reflect! Father, beware!
God sees you, starry Heaven is looking on!
I asked myself, when I had heard the plot,
What honor did require me to do.
'Twas clear, alas, denounce your infamy,
Together with your miserable wife!
For you that would have meant both death and torture,
And, worse than all, the glory of your past
Effaced at one fell stroke by open crime.
Atrocious thought, a son betray his father!
I could not do it; it filled my heart with terror.
But now time passes, I must act. Give way!
Appease your country and high Heaven in wrath.

Mich. Too late. Repent that you have saved my life.
I will do that on which I have resolved.

Cons. You would give up our ancient frontier post!
The Turks would ravage Europe from end to end,
The whole Christian world.

Mich. It was ungrateful.

Cons. And Christ! Your God!

Mich. And has he made me king?
In spite of him, I swear I'll have the crown.

Cons. The crown, perhaps, will fit no traitor's brow.
It might, indeed, new ruler of the Balkans,
Slip to your shoulder and a shackle cling.

Mich. You would insult me? Your madness goes too far!

Cons. Well, I am wrong. 'Tis true! I crave your pardon!
I know not what to say. I call to rescue

The memory of warriors now dead,
Their glories and heroic deeds of yore,
The prowess and exploits of his younger days.
Hasten! Rise up around him now he wavers,
And make him blush to think of treason's name.
Tell him, to-morrow when returning home,
The standards hanging at the palace gates
Would strive to give him buffets as he passed.
Tell him, oh, tell the hero who now falters,
His soldiers who have fallen in the wars
Know he has thought of this surpassing crime,
That they are speaking of it underground;
One passing in the evening by their tombs
Would hear a murmur run among the heath.

Throwing himself upon his knees, Constantine prays that he may recover his hero and his father; that his father will light the beacon and cast his base project in the flames like a poisonous herb, and that the night wind may sweep away this horrible dream in the whirling flame and sparks. Michael stops him brusquely, telling him to rise, and swears by all the demons that he will be king of mountain and plain, crown his queen, and take vengeance on the priest. No one, he swears, shall light the beacon while he lives.

Constantine remembers that the Turks are drawing near the pass at this very moment. Every second wasted makes him an accomplice. His sword, he says, leaps from its sheath, commanding him to be judge and executioner. He draws it, and Michael draws his.

Cons. I defend my country and all of Christian Europe,
My martial duty, the honor of my house.
But you for treason strike. May God preside.
Death to the traitor!

[CONSTANTINE *lunges at his father. Their swords cross for a moment.* MICHAEL *receives a thrust full in the chest and staggers.*]

Mich. Ah!
Cons. What have I done!
Mich. [*on the ground, expiring*]. Parricide!
Be accursed! [*He dies.*]

[CONSTANTINE *throws a torch on the beacon, which flames up. At a distance on the mountain other*

signal fires flare out, and cannon are heard giving the alarm.]

Cons. You are witnesses, stars, you eyes of God!
Before this body and before this fire
I dare regard you and reveal my soul.
My father would betray his land and faith!
Oh, stars, I have killed my father. Judge me then.

An interval of some months has elapsed. Ourosch, whose daughter Anna is dressing his wounds, is discussing with Lazare, another soldier, the frequency of the defeats suffered by the Christians since the death of Michael Brancomir, who fell bravely at his post and to whom a statue has been erected at Widdin. They criticise Constantine, blaming his recklessness in giving battle to the Turks, and commenting upon his gloomy manner and his coldness toward the widowed Bazilide. Lazare suspects him of treachery, and Anna alone has a word to say in his favor.

Constantine by turns reproaches himself for his terrible crime, and justifies his conduct to himself. Bazilide seeks an interview with him, and tells him that although aware of his hatred toward her she is anxious for the welfare of the son of the dead hero. His rashness in battle and frequent defeats, she says, have bred discontent among the soldiers, who suspect him of being a traitor. The Turks, she has learned, have crossed the Balkans through a ravine and will reach Widdin in a few days. He is anxious to rush at once to arms, but Bazilide assures him that the army will no longer obey him. The mutinous soldiers are heard shouting outside.

She has a means of safety to offer Constantine. By employing it he may accomplish an object dreamed of by his father, whose reason for going to Trajan's arch was to extend his hand to Othorgul. If Michael had shown more energy he might have become a strong and powerful king. Constantine may succeed where his father failed, and bestow peace and happiness upon his country.

Impulsively she draws from her bosom the Sultan's firman, on which Michael placed his seal. The bargain still holds good; she has just seen an agent of the Turks. Meanwhile, sedition is spreading. Before long Constantine

will undoubtedly be denounced as disloyal. But it is the throne that she offers him. She exhorts him to be more resolute than his father and open the way to the Turks.

Cons. Infamous! This surpasses every bound.
You dare to offer me the selfsame treason!
Wretch that you are, I will be satisfied,
And blurt the hideous secret in your face!

Baz. What!

Cons. I, too, was at the Roman arch,
Alone, save for my father, sword in hand . . .

Baz. You!

Cons. And well I know, thou wretched woman,
That Brancomir had done the infamous act,
So was he hardened by your arts in crime.
Had I not slain him with this very hand.

Baz. You! His son!

Cons. Yes, parricide am I!
The cause of this so frightful freak of chance
Was you alone! And I endure the guilt.
Speak not. Your crime was shared by him as well.
By irony of fate it has to be
That you unpunished live to spare his honor.
I cannot brand you, woman, in the sight
Of God and man, but I at least can say
That I have blasted your insane chimæra.
The snare you set in darkness secretly,
Destroyed by me, did fail to take its prey.
'Twas I who shattered your so frightful hope,
And like a dagger in your wicked heart
I'd plunge the hellish fangs of this regret,
And make you bear the burden of your murder.
Nature outraged, and law I would avenge
In shaking o'er your head these bloody hands.

Baz. Beware! . . .

Cons. You wish to reign and make a king!
But I shall bring your crafty wiles to nought.

A flourish of trumpets and acclamations resound without. The great doors of the hall are flung apart and the bishop-king, crowned and mitred, with a cuirass over his white robe, carrying a sceptre surmounted by a golden reliquary, enters abruptly. He is accompanied by a number of

boyars, and by peasants armed with scythes. The citadel guard press in disorder about the king.

The soldiers denounce Constantine as a traitor and call for vengeance on his head. The king silences the clamor. He declares himself ready to take the field against the enemy in defence of Christianity and liberty, and invites Constantine to accompany him and thus dissipate the fears and suspicions that have been aroused. Such a man as Constantine, he says, must not be accused without proof.

Baz. I then with such proof do here accuse him!
King. You, princess?
Cons. [*aside*]. My God!
Baz. You wish a proof,
Holy Bishop? Listen! I the widow
Of Brancomir, the hero whom we mourn,
Affirm that all these men have said the truth.
Herewith I show the proof that you demand.
[*She gives him the Sultan's firman.* CONSTANTINE *starts.*]
An instrument which offers him the crown,
If the Turks may cross the mountains unopposed.
Ah! . . . What is that! . . . The seal of Brancomir!
Crowd [*in indignation*]. Ha!
Baz. He sought to make me his accomplice.
It is my care to see that he is punished.
Cons. Wretched woman!
Baz. And then continue mourning . . .
[*Aside.*] Avenged!
[*She goes out. The muttering of the crowd increases.*]
Cons. [*aside*]. Do you permit this wrong to me,
Just God! I find your wrath a heavy weight!
I must be silent or accuse my father.
King. You do not speak?
Cons. [*aside*]. Defend myself? But how?
King. Exonerate yourself from such a charge!
Your silence is construed to be admission.
Cons. [*aside*]. Conceal the treason! Bury parricide!
I only ask for death, so let it come.

King. For the last time, will you say nothing?
Cons. Nothing.
Crowd. Death to the traitor!
King. Justice shall be done.
We give the executioner his head;
His crime is that which Judas did commit. . . .
Seize him!

[*Soldiers surround* CONSTANTINE.]

My friends, we will concern ourselves
With sacred vengeance in the holy war.
Your only chief is now a white-haired priest;
But he is full of hope, and God will guide.
Have at the Turk, soldiers of Christ! To war!

[*The crowd cheer loudly and follow the* KING *from the hall. As chains are being placed on* CONSTANTINE, MILITZA *runs forward and throws herself on her knees before him.*]

Victory has attended the arms of the Christians, and while the people are rejoicing in a square in Widdin and describing the losses of the Turks, the king arrives. Having declared that the glory belongs to God alone, he directs that Constantine be brought forth from prison. Pointing to the statue of Michael Brancomir, he reminds Constantine of his father's achievements, dwells on the enormity of his treason, and once more urges him to confess his crime fully and to allow his heart to melt at the thought of the disgrace he has brought upon his father's name. Constantine is still silent. The king joins the council which is sitting in judgment. When he returns he announces that Constantine has been found guilty, but that death is considered too slight a punishment. The crowd clamor for his execution.

King. Silence! He shall live, but in a way
Shall make him crave the dreadfulest of deaths.
Enchained forever to the pedestal
Where stands his father in eternal bronze
He'll live devoid of hope to gain release;
And you shall spit upon him as you pass
And fling the gutter's mud upon the craven.
But do not strike him, do not spill his blood;
For he must live and all his shame endure.

SCENE FROM "FOR THE CROWN"
Lazare. The crime escapes its punishment

Cons. Horrible!
Worse than death this sentence is.
Do you approve it, do you feel avenged?
Crowd. Yes.
Lazare. May he suffer long.
Ourosch. Well done!
Lazare. Well judged!
Anna. Unhappy man! It's worse than rope or axe.
Cons. To live thus, and live on! O God!
King. Chain him!
[*Soldiers seize* CONSTANTINE *and drag him to the base of the statue.*]
It is forever. Death alone can end
His suffering, a warning to all traitors.
Our. [*standing out from the crowd*].
Long may he suffer in despair and shame,
In pillory beneath his father's image.
Cons. [*aside*]. My father's place should be where I shall be.
Laz. [*coming forward*]. May he remain attached here to this bronze
Belike some hideous ulcer on a tree.
Cons. [*aside*]. Sustain me, Heavenly Father, give me strength
That I may bear my burden to the end.
Laz. [*to the* KING]. Oh, king, we scarce contain the wrath we feel.
You wished that he should live, and he is saved.
But let us hear him howl, the forest beast.
For what we may do every day we'd do;
Let each of us who wishes to, confront him
And cast an insult, spittle or a curse.
[MILITZA *runs forward and throws herself into* CONSTANTINE'S *arms.*]
Militza. There's one who will embrace him, one who loves him!
Cons. Militza!
Mil. [*to the crowd*]. And now base executioners, come.
Together we will undergo the outrage.
Laz. Take her from him.
King. Wait! Now tell me, woman,
You know this man to be an infamous monster,

His crime a horror in the light of day,
What are you who defend him?
Mil. I am love.
So let the clamor of the mob resound!
For love is for him, which stronger is than justice.
Laz. Kill her!
The king restrains him with a violent gesture.
Mil. Yes, love, oh, people, greedy of blood,
Is faithful and believes him innocent.
Cons. [*kissing her forehead*].
Some one loves me!
Mil. You wanted him to live
To suffer. I will deliver him from that.
King. How?
Mil. [*to* CONSTANTINE, *drawing from her bosom the poniard which he formerly gave her.*]
'Twas you who gave this dagger to me,
Constantine! [*She stabs him.*] See! I love you!
Cons. Thanks!
I die! [*Dies.*]
Crowd. Ha!
Mil. If heaven exists I follow thee. [*Kills herself.*]
Laz. The crime escapes of punishment.
King. Perhaps.
God will do justice to this sleeping pair.
Respect the dead, and pray for their repose.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC*

By Edmond Rostand

Translated by Gertrude Hall

First played in Paris at the Porte Saint-Martin Théâtre on December 28, 1897.

Argument: Cyrano, famed as poet and duellist, and for the excessive stature of his nose, is hopelessly in love with Roxane, a frivolous court beauty. He generously determines to sacrifice himself to her happiness, and to advance the suit of a handsome cavalier to whom she has taken a fancy by supplying the young man with the wit which he lacks. Whether Roxane has the discrimination to appreciate Cyrano is the crux on which the drama hangs.

In the hall used for theatrical performances in the Hotel de Bourgogne, in Paris, in the year 1640, a motley crowd, courtiers and burghers, lackeys and cavaliers, thronged to one of the obscurest of productions, assured at least of some entertainment, for Cyrano de Bergerac, poet and duellist, had forbidden the actor Montfleury to appear upon the boards for an entire month.

First Marquis. What is this Cyrano?

Cuigy. A crack-brain!

Second Marquis. Of quality?

Cuigy. Enough for daily uses. He is a cadet in the Guards. [*Calling.*] Le Bret! . . . [Le Bret *comes toward them.*] You are looking for Bergerac?

Le Bret. Yes. I am uneasy.

Cuigy. Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow?

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Le B. [*affectionately*]. The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon!

Ragueneau. Poet!

Cuigy. Swordsman!

Brissaille. Physicist!

Le B. Musician!

Lignière. And what an extraordinary aspect he presents!

Rag. I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champaigne will leave us a portrait of him; but the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques. Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock; prouder than all the Artabans that Gascony ever bred, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose. . . . Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasigera without exclaiming, "No! truly, the man exaggerates," . . . After that, one smiles, one says: "He will take it off." . . . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all.

Le B. [*shaking his head*]. He wears it always . . . and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment.

Rag. [*proudly*]. His blade is half the shears of Fate!

There is a general flutter at the arrival of Magdeleine Robin, a famous beauty, also called Roxane, who is Cyrano's cousin. It is current gossip that the Comte de Guiche is enamored of her, and, himself married to Richelieu's niece, wishes to bring about a match between Roxane and a certain Monsieur de Valvert.

Finally the gentry go behind the curtain to occupy their places on the stage-seats. The hall is crowded and there is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery. Three knocks are heard and the curtain is drawn apart. Violins play softly, then a bagpipe as Montfleury appears upon the stage. He is an enormous man, clad in shepherd's costume, with rose-wreathed hat on one side of his head. The audience start to applaud but there is an interruption.

A Voice. Rogue! Did I not forbid you for one month?

Every one looks about. There are murmurs, and some rise from their seats. The voice warns the actor to vanish. Montfleury hesitates and then begins to recite. Cyrano appears above the audience, standing on a chair, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying. There is a sensation at sight of him.

Cyrano. Ah! I shall lose my temper!

Montfleury [*to the* MARQUISES]. Messieurs, I appeal to you!

One of the Marquises [*languidly*]. But go ahead! . . . Play!

Cyr. Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this! [*Raises his stick.*]

The Marquis. Enough!

Cyr. Let every little lordling keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane!

All the Marquises [*rising*]. This is too much! . . . Montfluery. . . .

Cyr. Let Montfleury go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him!

A Voice. But . . .

Cyr. Let him go home, I said!

Other Voice. But after all . . .

Cyr. It is not yet done? [*With show of turning up his sleeves.*] Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn. . . .

Mont. [*calling up his whole dignity*]. Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse!

Cyr. [*very civilly*]. Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . . just as you stand there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

The audience become impatient, but Cyrano orders them all to hold their tongues, challenges everybody, says he will take down their names and promises them mortuary flowers. Again he turns to the stage and tells the actor to begone before he counts three. Montfleury goes. Cyrano has two grounds for disliking him: first, because he is an execrable actor, and secondly—but that is Cyrano's secret.

The performance is broken up, and as the audience depart a bore accosts Cyrano, observing that Montfleury has a powerful patron. Cyrano tells him shortly to be on his way.

Cyr. Face about, I say . . . or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

The Bore [*bewildered*]. I . . .

Cyr. [*advancing upon him*]. In what is it unusual?

The Bore [*backing*]. Your worship is mistaken.

Cyr. [*same business as above*]. Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

The Bore. I never said . . .

Cyr. Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

The Bore. I . . .

Cyr. Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

The Bore. But . . .

Cyr. Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

The Bore. Oh . . .

Cyr. Is it a freak of nature?

The Bore. But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

Cyr. And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

The Bore. I had . . .

Cyr. So it disgusts you?

The Bore. Sir . . .

Cyr. Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

The Bore. Sir . . .

Cyr. Its shape unfortunate?

The Bore. But far from it!

Cyrano finally chastises him and lets him go. The Comte de Guiche finds Cyrano tiresome and asks if there is no one who will take him up. Valvert responds and swaggers up to Cyrano. He remarks that Cyrano's nose is very large. Cyrano affects surprise that he should find no more to say upon the subject and gives him a suggestion or two.

Cyr. For instance, here you are:—Aggressive: "I, Monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable: "It must be in your way while drinking; you ought to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive: "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a

promontory! . . . A promonotory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive: "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an inkhorn or a scissor-case?" Mincing: "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt: "Tell me, Monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying 'The chimney is afire?'" Anxious: "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender: "Have a little sunshade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned: "None but the beast, Monsieur, mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand: "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic: "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor-Wester!" Dramatic: "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring: "What sign for a perfumer's shop!"

So Cyrano runs on fluently to show him what might be said in other modes, lyrical, simple, deferent, rustic, military, practical, and what not.

In reply all that Valvert can find to say is that Cyrano is a clodhopper and loutishly dressed.

Cyr. My foppery is of the inner man. I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more fastidious if I am not so showy. I would not sally forth by any chance not washed quite clean of an affront, my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety blackrimmed.

Valvert, outfaced, turns to go when Cyrano cries out, declaring his rapier prickles like a foot asleep. Valvert draws his sword. Cyrano composes a ballade as they fence, which he says will have three stanzas of eight lines each and an envoy of four, and at the last line, he says, he will give Valvert a charming little hurt.

There are acclamations from every side as Cyrano keeps his word. Ladies toss flowers and handkerchiefs from the boxes. Officers congratulate him. The wounded man is carried off. Le Bret takes Cyrano to task for making enemies recklessly, and demands his actual reason for disliking Montfleury.

Cyr. That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair. And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, casts languishing glances at them with his moist frog's eyes.

The Thespian has been so bold as to cast his glance on the lady whom Cyrano loves, "the most beautiful that breathes!" He is speaking of Roxane.

Cyr. Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think may justly be entertained with this protuberance. Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood. I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour. With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April. . . . And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing with a cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle—I forget—and then . . . then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden wall!

Le Bret reminds Cyrano of the admiration of the ladies so recently attested, and tells him that during the duel Roxane went deadly pale. It is only a moment later that Roxane's duenna seeks out Cyrano and archly imparts to him the fact that somebody is going to hear Mass at Saint Roch at the earliest roses of the dawn, who afterward might be skilfully decoyed into a tête-à-tête. Cyrano, his head in a whirl, tells her to take her mistress into Ragueneau's, the pastrycook's near the church in the Rue St. Honoré.

In his infatuation Cyrano longs for an army to put to rout. The wish is answered in a manner by the entrance of a drunken cavalier, Lignière, who has been warned that a hundred men are waiting in ambush at the Porte de Nesle to attack him on his way home. He begs permission to spend the night at Cyrano's house. Cyrano says he shall and, furthermore, Cyrano sallies out to meet the hundred at the Porte de Nesle.

Ragueneau is somewhat of a poet as well as pastrycook, and is composing in his kitchen with an inspired air, counting on his fingers in the gray dawn as helpers hedge him

about with custards, mince pies, and other delicacies from the ovens. One of them has made a lyre of pie-crust in his honor, with candied fruits and strings of spun sugar. He is deeply touched.

A number of shabby poets who profess great friendship for Ragueneau and gobble up his comestibles like ogres report that a single man has put to flight a hundred at the Porte de Nesle. Eight ruffians, they say, ripped open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement. Cyrano, who has come in, is writing a letter to Roxane, lacking the courage to tell her his love. Cyrano sighs, the poets sidle up to the cream tarts, and Ragueneau reads a recipe in rhyme, setting forth how almond cheese-cakes should be made.

At last Roxane comes. She wants to thank Cyrano for chastising Valvert, whom de Guiche is trying to force on her as a husband. But there is something else which she desires to confide in him, though she hardly dares. There is some one whom she loves. Cyrano, nearly bereft of sense, can only murmur, "Ah!"

Roxane. But if he does not know it, he soon will.

Cyrano. Ah! . . .

Rox. A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak. . . .

Cyr. Ah! . . .

Rox. No, leave me your hand. It is hot, this will cool it. . . . But I have read his heart in his face.

Cyr. Ah! . . .

Rox. [*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*]. And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence—that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

Cyr. Ah! . . .

Rox. [*laughing*]. Yes. He is a cadet, in the same company!

Cyr. Ah! . . .

Rox. He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave, handsome.

Cyr. [*rising, pale*]. Handsome! . . . .

Rox. What . . . what is the matter?

Cyr. With me? . . . Nothing! . . . It is . . . it is . . . [*Showing his hand, smiling.*] You know! . . . It smarts a little . . .

Roxane says she has seen the young man only once, at

the play, and that they have spoken to each other only with their eyes. He is Baron Christian de Neuvillette, just admitted to the cadets, and he has hair like one of d'Urfé's heroes. She has just learned that the cadets in Cyrano's company are all Gasçons, and that they pick quarrels with any not Gasçons who manage to get in through favoritism. In fact, she wants Cyrano to guarantee Christian protection. Cyrano promises.

Rox. Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go. [*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head; says absentmindedly.*] But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter. It must have been amazing! . . . Tell him to write to me. [*She kisses her hand to him.*] I love you dearly!

Cyr. Yes, yes.

Rox. A hundred men against you? . . . Well, adieu. We are fast friends.

Cyr. Yes, yes.

She departs hastily. A number of the cadets come to compliment Cyrano on his latest and most astonishing exploit. The town is agog over it. A number of ladies wish to be presented to the hero. Distinguished officers express their admiration. Even De Guiche has come at the request of the Marshal de Gaussion.

De Guiche says that Richelieu has found Cyrano's spontaneity diverting. Le Bret is dazzled, thinking that now there will be no difficulty in getting Cyrano's tragedy played. But De Guiche reveals that it was he who set the ambush for Lignière, a drunken scribbler. A cadet entering at that moment with a number of draggled hats on his sword, Cyrano takes the sword and saying, "Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends," shakes off the hats at De Guiche's feet. Le Bret is plunged in despair at seeing his needy friend cut the throat of opportunity.

Christian is darkly warned by his new companions that there is one thing no more to be mentioned in their company than the rope in the house of the hanged. "Two persons were lately cut off in their pride," says one, "for talking through their noses. Cyrano thought it personal." Christian is also informed that he will be expected to prove his courage. He at once determines to prove it in the

manner which he sees will make the greatest effect upon the cadets.

Cyrano is describing his exploit at the Porte de Nesle. The streets being nowise lighted, he says, when the moon was obscured you could see no farther than—— "Your nose," cries Christian. Cyrano stops in amazement and asks who the young man is. As soon as he learns he suppresses his wrath and goes on with the story.

Cyr. And as I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

Christian. Nose . . .

[*All get up.* CHRISTIAN *has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs.*]

Cyr. [*choking*]. Finger . . . between the tree and the bark; for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me . . .

Chris. On my nose . . .

Cyr. [*wipes the sweat from his brow*]. But, said I, "Gascony, forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance—when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow . . .

Chris. Upon the nose . . .

Cyr. I ward it . . . and thereupon find myself . . .

Chris. Nose to nose . . .

Cyr. [*springing toward him*]. Ventre-Saint-Gris! . . . [*All the* GASÇONS *rush forward, to see;* CYRANO, *on reaching* CHRISTIAN, *controls himself and proceeds.*] . . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling . . .

Chris. To the nose's limit . . .

Cyr. [*deathly pale, and smiling*]. . . . of garlic and of grease. I leap forward, head lowered . . .

Chris. Nose to the wind! . . .

Thoroughly infuriated, Cyrano sends out the cadets, who expect to find nothing but a mound of mince meat to represent Christian upon their return, but Cyrano explains his forbearance to the young man. Christian, who felt so little fear of an invincible swordsman, is in despair because in the presence of women he cannot find a word to say, but Cyrano proposes to lend him eloquence, saying that Christian shall lend him all-conquering physical charm and that

they will walk side by side, Christian in the full light, Cyrano in his shadow.

There is a balcony over the door of Roxane's house, which stands in a small square in the old Marais. Roxane harbors a dismal foreboding that Christian, because he is so handsome, cannot possibly be witty, and in fact when he meets her at the door of her house and attempts to make love to her his eloquence is so rudimentary that she quits him in disdain and takes refuge indoors. Cyrano comes to the rescue. Standing under a balcony, he prompts Christian, enabling him to coax Roxane to the window.

Rox. To-night your words come falteringly. . . . Why is it?

Cyr. [*talking low like* CHRISTIAN]. Because of the dark. They have to grope to find your ear.

Rox. My words do not find the same difficulty.

Cyr. They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart. My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small. . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly; mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

Rox. They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes.

Cyr. They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

Rox. It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

Cyr. It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

Rox. [*with the motion of leaving*]. I will come down.

Cyr. [*quickly*]. Do not!

Rox. [*pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony*]. Then do you get up on the seat.

Cyrano suggests that they profit by the chance to talk softly together without seeing each other. He says it seems to him that he is speaking to her for the first time. Protected by the dark he dares to be himself. She notices that his voice is different. The moment inevitably comes, he says, in which, feeling the noble depth of their love, it hurts to utter a shallow word. She asks what words he will then say to her.

FRANCIS WILSON AS CYRANO, LULU GLASER AS ROXANE

Chris. [Whom Cyrano is prompting.] You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of loving you no more . . . when I can love you no more

Cyr. All those, all those, all those that come to me! Not in formal nosegay order, . . . I will throw them you in a wild sheaf! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear. . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much. . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell; and as I know no rest, Roxane, always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name! . . . Of you I remember all, all that I love! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair. . . . I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eye sets swimming golden blots! . . .

Rox. [*in a voice unsteady with emotion*]. Yes . . . this is love . . .

He says that she is trembling like a flower among the leaves, for he felt a tremor pass along a jasmine bough, which he madly kisses.

Rox. Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away . . . away! . . .

Cyr. Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

Chris. [*under the balcony*]. A kiss!

Rox. [*drawing hastily back*]. What?

Cyrano has to begin his suit for a kiss anew. "Kiss. The word is sweet," he says. "Why does your fair lip stop at it? If the mere word burns it, what will be the thing itself?"

Cyr. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving; a secret which elects the mouth for ear; an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee; balmy communion with a flavor of flowers; a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

Rox. Say no more . . . no more!

Cyr. A kiss, Madame, is a thing so noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

Rox. If that be so . . .

Cyr. [*with increasing fervor*]. Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence, like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

Rox. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you!

Cyr. [*to himself, sobered*]. True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten!

Rox. Come, then, and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

Cyr. [*pushing* CHRISTIAN *toward the balcony*]. Go!

Rox. . . . tasting of the heart.

Cyr. Go! . . .

Rox. . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

Cyr. Go!

Chris. [*hesitating*]. But now I feel as if I ought not!

Rox. . . . making Eternity an instant . . .

Cyr. [*pushing* CHRISTIAN]. Scale the balcony, you donkey!

[CHRISTIAN *springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts, and balusters*].

Chris. Ah, Roxane! [*He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips.*]

Cyr. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in the shade . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me!

The scene is interrupted by the arrival of a monk with a letter for Roxane. It is from De Guiche, who is coming to see her. She announces, however, that De Guiche sent the monk to pronounce the nuptial blessing over Christian and herself. The monk goes in with them to perform this office while Cyrano remains on guard and delays De Guiche.

De Guiche conceals his chagrin upon learning that the knot has been tied, but he tells Roxane that she must now take leave of her husband, as the cadets are to go with the army to the relief of Arras, which is besieged by the Spaniards. Roxane entrusts Christian to Cyrano, and bids him see that Christian writes often.

The French are caught in a trap before Arras, being themselves surrounded and besieged. Their supplies have been cut off and they are nearly starved. Cyrano, every morning at great risk, steals through the enemy's lines and sends off a letter. He fears that the last day has come, as a powerful attack is expected. De Guiche has served his King as well as his inclination by giving the cadets the post of greatest danger.

The Spaniards, although formidable enemies, are the most gallant of men, and permit Roxane to drive through their lines in her coach when she tells them she is going to see her lover. Ragueneau is her coachman, and the vehicle is completely stuffed with the most delectable viands. Christian's letters went to Roxane's heart, and she had to come.

Rox. Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen: The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when, below my window, in a voice I did not know before, your soul began to reveal itself. . . . Think then what the effect should be of your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . .

She says that now at last she loves him for his soul alone.

Rox. Rejoice! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture. . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow: the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

Chris. Oh!

Rox. You question your own triumph?

Chris. [*sorrowfully*]. Roxane!

Rox. I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me?

Chris. I do not wish to be loved like that! I wish to be loved quite simply . . .

Rox. Still would I love you! . . . Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

Chris. Do not say it!

Rox. But I do say it, . . . I do!

Chris. What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

Rox. If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

Christian calls Cyrano and takes him aside to tell him that it is he whom she loves now.

Cyr. Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her, and that she should have spoken it—but believe me, do not take her at her word: Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are. . . . She would not forgive me!

Christian protests that he is weary of carrying about a rival in himself, that he will be loved for what he is or not at all, and that Cyrano must tell her. Cyrano questions Roxane. She says that nothing could make Christian grotesque to her. If he were dreadfully ugly, disfigured, she would only love him the more. Cyrano loses his head and is about to tell her all when Le Bret comes to him and whispers a few words in his ear. Firing is heard.

Cyr. It's all over. My lips are sealed forevermore!

Cadets come in, attempting to conceal something they carry between them. Cyrano draws Roxane away, but she soon learns that Christian has been killed by the enemy's first shot. She throws herself on his body and the cadets rush back to repel the assault.

Cyrano wants to go to the barricade with his comrades, but Roxane clings to his hand.

Rox. [*clinging*]. No! . . . Stay with me a little! . . . He is dead. You are the only one that truly knew him. . . . [*She cries subduedly.*] Was he not an exquisite being, . . . an exceptional, marvellous being? . . .

Cyr. [*standing bareheaded*]. Yes, Roxane.

Rox. A poet without his peer, . . . one verily to reverence?

Cyr. Yes, Roxane.

Rox. A sublime spirit?

Cyr. Yes, Roxane.

Rox. A profound heart, such as the profane could never have understood . . . a soul as noble as it was charming? . . .

Cyr. [*firmly*]. Yes, Roxane.

Rox. [*throwing herself on* CHRISTIAN'S *body*]. And he is dead!

Cyr. [*aside, drawing his sword*]. And I have now only to die, since, without knowing it, she mourns my death in his!

[*Trumpets in the distance.*]

Cyrano joins the fray, and the cadets repulse the enemy after a desperate struggle.

Fifteen years later Cyrano makes weekly visits at the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris, of which Roxane has been an inmate for more than ten years. She tells De Guiche that it seems sometimes as if Christian were only half dead, and that his love still wraps her round. Le Bret says that all has come to pass which he foretold: Cyrano neglected and in poverty, his writings ever breeding him new enemies.

Le B. Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet; his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sallow of old ivory; the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has!

De Guiche. Do not pity him too much, he signed no bonds with the world; he has lived free in his thought as in his actions. Sometimes I envy him. You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel—dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong!—a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness; and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves.

De Guiche has heard of plots to silence Cyrano.

Ragueneau brings word to Le Bret that Cyrano has been struck on the head by a block of wood that was thrown from a window. Ragueneau saw the occurrence and carried Cyrano, unconscious, to his lodgings. They hurry off to see him.

Monsieur de Bergerac is announced. He enters leaning heavily on his cane, keeping his feet with great difficulty.

Roxane, who is working on an interminable tapestry, hardly notices him but chides him on being late for the first time in fourteen years. He musters up a gruff voice to tease one of the sisters, and announces that he ate meat the day before, which was Friday, his favorite joke when he has really fasted. The sister is shocked at his appearance.

Cyr. And now I shall amaze you. Listen! . . . You are authorized to . . . pray for me, this evening . . . in the chapel.

Roxane is impatient to hear the news of the week which he always brings her. He begins, but as he is recounting some tittle-tattle of the court his eyes close and his head drops on his breast. Roxane at last takes alarm. / She calls his name.

Cyr. [*opening his eyes, in a faint voice*]. What is it? . . . What is the matter! [*He sees* ROXANE *bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror.*] No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

Rox. But surely . . .

Cyr. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . . even now . . .

Rox. Poor friend!

Cyr. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . [*He smiles with effort.*] It has passed.

Rox. Each one of us has his wound: I, too, have mine. It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound . . . [*She places her hand on her breast.*] It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

[*The light is beginning to grow less.*]

Cyr. His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

Rox. Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

It is too dark to see, but he repeats the letter word for word. / At last she perceives that for fourteen years he has been carrying out this generous imposture, when it was he who wrote the letters, the voice in the night was his, and his was the soul she loved.

LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU *enter running.*

Le B. Madness! Monstrous madness! . . . Ah, I was sure of it! There he is!

Cyr. [*smiling and straightening himself.*] *Tiens!* Where else?

Le B. Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed!

Rox. Merciful God! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . . ?

Cyr. It is true. I had not finished telling you the news. And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him. [*He takes off his hat; his head is seen wrapped in bandages.*]

Rox. What is he saying? . . .

Cyrano has had nothing he wanted in life. Not even a decent death. Ragueneau, who now has the post of candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre, tells him that Molière has appropriated a whole scene of his and put it in "Scapin."

Cyr. Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . . . and was forgotten! [*To* ROXANE.] Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke to you from below the balcony? There was the epitome of my life: while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory!

Roxane blames herself for wrecking his life. She says she never loved but one, and twice she loses him. She swoons.

He rises and stands with his back against a tree to die, declaiming and swinging his sword in great circles.

Cyr. One does not fight because there is hope of winning! No! . . . no! . . . it is finer to fight when it is no use! . . . What are all those? You are a thousand strong? . . . Ah, I know you now . . . all my ancient enemies! . . . Hypocrisy? . . . [*He strikes with his sword, in the empty air.*] Take this! and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises? . . . and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients? [*He strikes.*] That I should come to terms, I? . . . Never! Never! . . . [*Stops panting.*] Yes, you have wrested from me everything, laurel as well as rose . . . Work your wills! . . . Spite of your worst, something will still be left me to take whither I go . . . and to-night when I enter God's

house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep the azure threshold with what despite of all I carry forth unblemished and unbent . . . [*He starts forward, with lifted sword.*] . . . and that is . . . [*The sword falls from his hands, he staggers, drops in the arms of* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.]

Rox. [*bending over him and kissing his forehead*]. That is? . . .

Cyr. [*opens his eyes again, recognizes her and says with a smile.*] . . . My plume!*

*The symbol of his honor.

THE RED ROBE

By Eugène Brieux

First played in Paris at the Thèâtre du Vaudeville on April 15, 1900.

Argument: Vagret, the public prosecutor in a small French town, baffled by a murder mystery through which he had hoped to win promotion long due him, éntrusts the investigation to Mouzon, his secret rival, who claims that he can find the assassin in three days. Mouzon, to advance his own interests, insists on the guilt of a culprit whom he has found, and Vagret conducts the prosecution so skilfully that a conviction is virtually assured when he is assailed by doubt. Will Vagret sacrifice his career to spare the defendant, and can reparation be made for what the unfortunate man has suffered?

When Monsieur Vagret, the public prosecutor at Mauléon, was waked up in the night and informed of the murder of an aged man in a lonely part of his jurisdiction he believed that the great opportunity of his career had come at last. He dressed in five minutes and set to work with the greatest energy. At the end of a fortnight, however, the assassin being still at large, the opportunity began to assume the guise of disaster under the weight of public disappointment and the censure of the press.

It is the end of the court term, and Madame Vagret has made her preparations for the customary dinner in honor of the Judge of the Assizes. New appointments are announced at this time, and Madame Vagret is so confident that justice will be done her husband, in view of two vacancies, that she has had a red robe, the official vestment of Counselor, cleaned and pressed to show him when he brings the good news. She purchased the robe two years

before in anticipation of an appointment which was awarded to the brother-in-law of the Deputy.

Upon Vagret's return home he is obliged to give his wife the painful tidings that others have received the positions for which he was eligible. She cannot restrain her tears. It is difficult for her to make both ends meet on the salary of a prosecutor of the third class, and now that their children are growing up Bertha must be provided with a dowry and the two boys with the means of higher education.

Madame Vagret thinks that her husband is overscrupulous in being unwilling to seek political favor, and argues that he owes it to the magistracy as well as to himself to strive for advancement by every means. There is still another vacant counselorship, Vagret tells her, and the Attorney General has said that he favors Vagret for the post, but his wife reminds him that it is the support of the Deputy that he needs.

The dinner guests begin to arrive. Monsieur Bunerat, Judge of the Court of Mauléon, and Madame Bunerat are the first. Then come Judge La Bouzule, who is seventy years old and is about to retire, and Mouzon, a foppish man of forty. It is Mouzon who remarks upon the regrettable fact that three defendants have been acquitted during the court term. The last of the three was pronounced innocent that very day, and Bunerat informs Vagret that the Judge of the Assizes is furious, particularly as Vagret's assistant revealed attenuating circumstances.

Mouzon observes to Bunerat that this situation will not improve Vagret's chances of appointment. He declares, moreover, that he does not see why any one should think of naming Vagret when there is a man of so much talent as Bunerat at Mauléon, and flatters the Judge of the Court further by saying that he was very witty the other day when he asked an officious witness if he thought that he ought to be on the bench.

Ardeuil, Vagret's assistant, arrives, and La Bouzule asks him to sit by him. The old man warns Ardeuil that he will be superseded if he continues to behave as he did in the last trial. The assistant prosecutor knows, however, that La Bouzule has frequently indulged in the luxury of benevolence.

La Bouzule. Yes, my young friend. Because I have

been cured for some little time of the malady which changes so many honest men into bad judges. This malady is the fever for advancement. Look at the ones over there. If they were not infected by this microbe they would be just and kindly men, instead of being servile and cruel magistrates.

Ardeuil. You exaggerate, sir. The French magistracy is not——

La. Bou. It is not venal, that is true. Among our four thousand magistrates you would not find one perhaps—you understand me, not one!—even among the humblest and the poorest—especially among the humblest and poorest—who would accept money to modify his decision. That is the glory and the monopoly of the magistracy of our country. Let us honor it. But a great many of them are willing to lend themselves to compromises and concessions when it is a question of being agreeable to an influential elector, or to a Deputy, or to an official who distributes places and favors. Universal suffrage is the god and the tyrant of the magistrates. You are right, therefore, and I am not wrong.

There are certain obscure magistrates, La Bouzule admits, who never solicit anything in their whole lives, but if Ardeuil looks to the magistracy for a career in which he may rise, he would do well to take the advice of a man who has been a judge of the third class for forty years and hand in his resignation. He has made a mistake in the robe. It is only in that of a priest that one may attempt to put in practice the ideas which he has expressed.

A note is brought in for Madame Vagret which states that the Judge of the Assizes has a headache and cannot come to dinner. It is taken as a clear indication of his displeasure. Mouzon's comment is that three acquittals and the Irissarry murder make deplorable statistics. Bunerat observes that a decrease in court business will not raise Mauléon from the third to the second class. During the year they have given one hundred and eighteen years less imprisonment than in the preceding year, although defending the interests of society with the most extreme vigilance. Vagret says he has given the strictest orders for the suppression of smuggling.

Regarding the Irissarry case, Mouzon announces it as

his opinion that it was a mistake for the examining magistrate to get the idea into his head that the criminal was a tramp, and he declares that the witness who said he saw gypsies coming out of the house of the victim is either mistaken or a liar. He has had considerable experience in criminal cases, he reminds them. In the present instance a man eighty-seven years of age, living in an isolated house, was found murdered in his bed. Except for some small coins, nothing was taken but some family papers. That is the point which he emphasizes.

La Bouzule remarks to Ardeuil that Mouzon would have a man condemned simply to give himself an air of knowing a thing or two. Mouzon has several reasons for not believing that the crime was committed by a vagabond, above all that a vagabond would not have taken papers which would have convicted him if he were searched. Search should be made, he contends, among those, whether relatives, friends, or debtors, who would profit by the victim's taking off.

Vagret. That is reasonable. . . .

Bunerat. I say it is admirable logic, and as clear .

Mouzon. Believe me. The affair is simple. If I were responsible for the arraignments I would guarantee that the guilty man would be locked up in three days.

Vag. Well, my dear colleague, I am going to tell you some news. Monsieur Delorme, who is in ill health, resigned this afternoon. You shall be entrusted hereafter with the duties of examining magistrate in the Irissarry case.

Mou. I have only to say that I accept, my dear Prosecutor. My duty is to obey. I retract nothing that I have said. In three days the assassin will be arrested.

The clerk of the court is sitting in Mouzon's chair in the judge's chambers when the janitor gives warning of Mouzon's approach. He says that the judge came back from Bordeaux the night before and appeared to be very fatigued.

Clerk. A Mauléon magistrate is always tired when he comes back from Bordeaux!

Janitor. Why?

Clerk [*after a silence*]. I don't know.

Shortly after Mouzon has come in he receives a visit

from Mondoubleau, the Deputy of the Department. Mondoubleau inquires if he is very sure that he has arrested the right man in the Irissarry case, reminding him that the magistrate who had charge of the investigation at first was very experienced. Mouzon replies that he is morally certain. Fifteen years ago the prisoner, whose name is Etchepare, bought a vineyard of Goyetche, the man recently murdered, for which he agreed to pay an annuity for life. He thought he had made a very bad bargain and regarded Goyetche as a thief. Furthermore, he sold the vineyard five years ago and had to continue the payments.

Mouzon calls in an officer and asks him for the results of an examination. The officer has found witnesses who declare that Etchepare said it was maddening to have to pay money to the old rascal; that God had forgotten the old man; when he saw the officers coming that he was caught, and that his wife must not tell any one he had been out the night before. It is also known that the prisoner borrowed eight hundred francs recently. The murder was committed a week before the annual payment on the vineyard was due.

Mondoubleau compliments Mouzon warmly. He thinks that the other magistrate was an imbecile not to suspect Etchepare. Mouzon explains that a good examining magistrate is less guided by facts than by a sort of inspiration. He also contrives to flatter Mondoubleau, and makes him think that by supporting him he has provoked the censure of the newspapers printed in Basque, whereas the attacks are due to his disregard of the gypsies in the Irissarry case.

Before leaving Mondoubleau touches upon quite a different matter, the case of one Labastide, a man, he says, who was one of his best election agents and is incapable of having committed the acts with which he is charged. Mouzon assures him he will look into the affair. Mondoubleau replies that he esteems Mouzon too much to ask anything more.

As soon as the Deputy has gone Mouzon directs the clerk to make out an order for the discharge of Labastide on the ground that there is no cause of action. He then sends for the witness who wishes to testify that he saw

gypsies come out of Goyetche's house after the murder, endeavors to bully him into admitting that he desires to shield Etchepare, and failing in this dismisses him with an intimation that he will be charged with complicity if he persists in talking about the case.

A lawyer from Bordeaux who desires to defend Etchepare to gain publicity informs Mouzon that the defendant persists in declaring that he is innocent and is willing to be examined without having counsel present. Being in a hurry, the lawyer says, he does not care to remain for the examination, and will send one of his secretaries if the man wishes to consult any one before the trial.

When Etchepare is brought before Mouzon he seems uneasy at first, while denying that he made any of the statements attributed to him by witnesses, but when the magistrate has summarized the case against him he declares firmly that he did not assassinate the old man. Mouzon assures him that he will have to confess sooner or later in the face of such serious circumstances. Etchepare replies that he fears nothing, not even death.

Mou. So much the better. But you are a Basque. You are a Catholic. After death there is hell.

Etchepare. I do not fear hell, as I have done nothing wrong.

Mou. There is the dishonor which will fall upon your children. You love your children? Speak. They will ask for you—they love you—because they do not know yet——

Etch. [*suddenly crying*]. My poor little ones! My poor little ones!

Mou. Come! All good feeling is not extinct in you. Believe me, Etchepare, the jury will like you for your confession, for your repentance. You will escape the supreme penalty. You are still young. You have long years before you in which to expiate your crime. You can merit leniency, and perhaps once more see your children, who will have pardoned you. Believe me, believe me, it is in your own interest. Confess. [MOUZON *goes up to him, putting his hand on his shoulder, and continues very gently.*] Well. It's true? If you cannot speak make a sign for yes—Hey? It's true? Then I shall know it is true—Hey? I don't understand what you say. It was you, wasn't it? It was you!

Etch. [*still crying*]. It was not I, sir! I swear to you that it was not I! I swear it.

Mou. [*growing hard*]. You do not have to swear. You have only to tell me the truth.

Etch. I told the truth, I told it. I cannot say that it was I, since it was not I.

Finally Mouzon takes up Etchepare's absence from home on the night of the crime, which he says is attested by more than one witness. Etchepare now admits for the first time that he was not at home, but he says that he spent the night on the mountain searching for a horse that escaped from a herd which he had smuggled across the border from Spain. Mouzon ridicules this explanation as unworthy of a child, and tells him he would have done better to have stuck to his original story, in which he was supported by his wife. This is so obvious that Etchepare retracts the explanation and says that he lost his head.

Thinking that he made a mistake in suggesting how Etchepare should defend himself, Mouzon determines to retrieve it in examining Yanetta, Etchepare's wife. He informs her first of his belief that she advised her husband to commit the crime, and when she has insisted that her husband did not go out of the house that night he says he will consider the reliability of her testimony. He has looked up her past, and although her conduct has been exemplary since her marriage ten years ago, he has discovered that she went to Paris when she was sixteen, was employed as a servant, ran away with a young man who had stolen some money, and was sentenced to a month's imprisonment as a receiver of stolen property.

Yanetta. Oh, my God! I thought that was so long ago, so forgotten! It is all true, sir, but for ten years I have given every minute of my life to atonement, trying to redeem myself. A moment ago I answered you rudely! I beg your pardon. You hold not only my life in your hands, but that of my husband, and the honor of my children.

Mou. Is your husband ignorant of this?

Yan. Yes, sir. Oh! you are not going to tell him! I beg you on my knees. It would be a crime, yes, a crime. Listen to me, listen to me. I came back to the country and hid myself. I would have preferred to be dead. I

did not want to stay in Paris, you will understand why. And then, after some time, I lost my mother. Etchepare loved me, he urged me to marry him. I refused—I had the courage to refuse for three years—then, I was so lonely, so sad, so unfortunate, that I ended by yielding. I ought to have told him everything. I wanted to but I couldn't. He would have suffered too much.

Weeping bitterly, she begs him again to keep the knowledge of her dishonor from her husband. Reverting to Etchepare, he assures her in a sincere manner of her husband's guilt, but she cries that it is impossible. Once more she swears that he spent the night at home. Mouzon tells her that she will surely condemn her husband if she persists in telling this story, and at last she admits that he went out at ten o'clock and returned at five in the morning, the same hours that Etchepare had given Mouzon.

Then he asks her if she did not know that her husband was hard up and owed a large sum to Goyetche. Her claim that she was ignorant of it, he asserts, is an added proof that Etchepare went to Irissarry instead of to the mountain, as he told her. Mouzon suggests that her husband might have been drinking, went to ask Goyetche for time, and got into a quarrel with him. If he killed the old man in the heat of passion he may get off with a light sentence, but it is necessary for him to confess. Yanetta says she will urge her husband to tell everything, and Mouzon sends for him. When he is brought in she implores him to prove his innocence.

Etch. Nothing is any use. I know well enough I am lost. Everything I can do, all that I can say would serve no purpose. My words turn against me. The judge wishes me to be guilty. It's necessary to him for me to be guilty. Well, then, what do you wish, my poor wife? I haven't the strength to struggle against him. Let them do what they like with me. I shall say no more.

Yan. Yes, yes. You must talk. You must defend yourself. I implore you, Peter, I implore you to defend yourself. If you have anything, the least thing, to reproach yourself for, tell it. If you went to Irissarry you must say so. Perhaps you quarrelled with the unfortunate man. If that is true, say so, say so. Perhaps you fought and you—— The judge promised me just now in that

case you would not be punished—only a very little. My God! What have you to say?

Etch. What! Do you think me guilty, too! Speak! Do you think me guilty, too!

Yan. I no longer know! I no longer know!

Etch. [*to* MOUZON]. Oh! You have done this, too; you have invented this besides, to have me tortured by my wife. I do not know what you can have told her, but you have almost convinced her that I am a wretch, and you have hoped that she would be able to send me to the guillotine for the sake of my children. You spoke to me of my children because you know that I adore them and that they are everything to me. My two sons—my little George, and my little André! I pray God to kill them both if I am a criminal!

Yan. [*in great exaltation*]. He is innocent! I tell you that he is innocent! I tell you that he is innocent! [*A pause.*] Ah! Now you may say that you have proof, and ten witnesses, a hundred if you like, and you can say you saw him. I shall tell you that it is not true. It is not true! You could even prove it to me, but I should say it was not true. Oh, you know well, your honor, you have a heart, you know well what it is to love one's children. Then you must be certain now, you, too, that he is innocent. You are going to give him back to me, aren't you? It is decided now, and you are going to give him back to me?

Mou. If he is innocent, why did he lie to me?

Etch. It was you who lied! Yes, you. You told me you had witnesses who had seen me go out that night, and you had nobody.

Mou. If I had no one then I have some one now. Yes, there is a witness who has declared that on the night of the crime you were not at home, and that witness is your wife.

Etch. You?

Mouzon asks the clerk for the testimony, and while he glances over the paper Yanetta takes a long look at her husband, then at Mouzon, reflects and comes to a decision.

Yan. The night when Goyetche was assassinated my husband did not go out of the house.

Mou. You are going to sign this paper, and you are going to do it at once.

Yan. Everything in it is false! I tell you everything in it is false. [*Shrieking.*] The night when Goyetche was assassinated my husband did not go out of the house. My husband did not go out of the house.

Mou. [*pale with anger*]. You shall pay me for that. [*To the* CLERK.] Make out an order for her arrest. Yanetta Etchepare, I place you under arrest. You are inculpated as an accomplice in the assassination. [*To the police.*] Take this man to his cell, and come back for her. [*The police take out* ETCHEPARE.]

Yan. Oh, you are furious, are you, at not doing what you wanted! You have done everything, everything you could except to burn us with slow fire. You made out as if you were good. You talked sweetly! You wanted to make me send my husband to the scaffold. [MOUZON *affects to turn the papers over indifferently.*] It is your trade to furnish heads to cut off. You have to have victims at any price. When a man has fallen into your claws he is lost. They come in here innocent and they have to go out criminals. It's your trade, it's your glory to do it. You ask questions that don't seem to mean anything and may send a man into the other world, and when you have forced an unfortunate man to condemn himself you feel the joy of a savage.

Mou. [*to the police*]. Take her out. Be quick!

Yan. Yes, of a savage. That is justice! That is what you call justice. [*To the police.*] You shan't take me out like that. [*She clings to a chair.*] You are an executioner. You're as cruel as they were in the times when they crushed people's bones to make them confess. [*The police have detached her from the chair; she falls on the floor and yells what follows while they drag her to the door at the back.*] Yes! Beast! You don't know it yourself, and think you're a fine man, I know, and you're an executioner.

Mou. Take her away! What, can't two of you manage that crazy woman? [*They renew their efforts.*]

Yan. Executioner! Coward! Judas! Pitiless! Yes, pitiless! And more false and cruel when you deal with poor people like us! [*She is at door, to which she clings.*] Oh, the brutes, they are breaking my fingers! . . . Yes, the poorer one is the wickeder you are! [*They carry her out. Her cries are still heard outside.*] The poorer one

is the wickeder you are . . . The poorer one is the wickeder you are . . .

Since Etchepare's arrest things have been going to rack and ruin on his farm. There is no one to gather the harvest or treat with creditors, and his mother and children have been dispossessed. To crown all, a neighbor has poisoned the brook from which their farm animals drink by turning the waste from a manufacturing plant into it, and although Etchepare's mother has filed a complaint against the man, whose name is Labastide, he has refused to abate the nuisance. The old woman has come to the prosecutor's office to obtain redress, but learns that it will take two years by legal means.

Etchepare's trial is going on, and the court has just taken a recess, counsel for the defendant having finished his plea. The Judge of the Assizes, Mouzon, Madame Bunerat, and Madame Vagret come from the courtroom to the prosecutor's office. They fear that Etchepare will be acquitted. The news that the Attorney General has come to Mauléon and is going to appoint a Counselor to the Court of Appeals causes a good deal of excitement. La Bouzule and the clerk of the court confide in each other their opinion that Vagret ought to have the appointment, but when the Attorney General arrives and tells Mouzon that he wishes to see him privately it is regarded as settled that Mouzon is his choice.

Confident of the appointment, Mouzon is greatly elated, but the first words of the Attorney General are disquieting. A complaint has been lodged with him charging Mouzon with conduct unbecoming a magistrate in having gone about publicly in Bordeaux in a state of intoxication, accompanied by three women of immoral life in the same condition, and in having abused police officers who interfered with him and threatened to have them dismissed from the service. Mouzon is unable to turn the matter off as one of little importance. The Attorney General demands his resignation. Mouzon flatly declines to resign, and says that he will defend his position if steps are taken to remove him.

Mondoubleau, finding the Attorney General alone, surprises him by asking for the appointment for Mouzon.

He makes light of Mouzon's misconduct and of the fact that the post has been promised to Vagret. The Attorney General informs him that the press of Bordeaux will expose the scandal unless Mouzon is removed. On the other hand, Mondoubleau points out, no less a person than the Keeper of the Seals will be displeased if Mouzon is not appointed. The solution he suggests is to remove Mouzon from Mauléon, thus pacifying the press, and to appoint him to the Court of Appeals, to please his own party, and so to satisfy everybody. The Attorney General thinks the Deputy cannot be serious, but the latter drags him off to see the Senator, who has it in his power to do a favor for the Attorney General.

Vagret's summing up has taken the jury by storm and evidently converted an acquittal into a conviction, but instead of letting the jury go out at once he has asked for a recess. He informs the Judge of the Assizes, who is presiding at the trial, that he has been troubled by a doubt and wishes to consult him and the Attorney General, whom he has just met in the corridor.

Judge. Have you detected some error on my part in conducting the pleadings?

Vag. No, if there has been an error it was my own.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL *comes in.*

Attorney General. What is there so serious about this, my dear Prosecutor?

Vag. This . . . I'm perplexed to know how to put it . . . I have need of both of your consciences to reassure me.

Att. Gen. Speak.

Vag. The whole bearing of the facts, the attitude of the defendant, certain particulars that I had overlooked, have made a doubt break on me as to the guilt of this man.

Att. Gen. Was there any trace of these facts, these particulars, in your brief?

Vag. Certainly.

Att. Gen. His counsel studied the brief?

Vag. Naturally.

Att. Gen. Well, then, what is bothering you?

Vag. But . . . if this man was not guilty?

Att. Gen. The jury will decide. All the rest of us have only to bow before its decision.

Vag. Permit me to tell you, sir, how my conviction was shaken.

Att. Gen. I don't want to know. All this rests with you and your conscience. You have the right to lay your scruples before the jury. You know the adage: "The pen is servile but speech is free."

Vag. I am going to follow your advice.

Att. Gen. I'm not giving you any advice.

Vag. I am going to lay my doubts before the jury.

Att. Gen. That means an acquittal.

Vag. What do you wish?

Att. Gen. [*angry*]. Do what you like, only, I have one thing to say to you, my dear sir. When one considers causing such an explosion, one has the courage to accomplish it by himself. One has the courage to accept the sole responsibility for whatever blunders one may commit. You are too clever for that and know how to find a way out of suffering the consequences of your indecision.

Vag. I clever! In what way?

Att. Gen. Come, come, we are not children, and I see the trap that you have laid for me very plainly. Now you have protected yourself. If you are reproached in the Chancellor's office you can say that you consulted your superior and I will be the victim. Here am I with a job on my hands with the Chancellor's office. You are not worried about my situation, nor with interests that don't affect you. You've got some crotchet or other into your head, and you want to pass it on to me in spite of my responsibility. Once more, it is very clever. I compliment you, but I do not thank you.

Vag. You have not understood me, sir. I do not intend in any way to turn over to you the responsibility that I must assume. I should not commit such a mistake when I am about to be appointed Counselor. I tell you my difficulty and ask your advice. That is all.

Judge. Are you certain?

Vag. If I were certain I should not ask advice! [*A pause.*] If there were only a chance for an annulment . . .

Judge [*furious*]. What do you say? A chance for an annulment, based on an error or an oversight on my part, you mean! Well, you have a lively imagination, my dear

Prosecutor. Some doubt or other strikes you, some anxiety, and to soothe your wretchedly uneasy conscience you ask me to be good enough to put myself in the wrong! It's very convenient to pass over to some one who has done his duty the mistakes that you have made yourself.

Att. Gen. [*softly*]. That's about it.

Judge. And in speaking of me at the Chancellor's office they would say: "What sort of a Counselor is this who is not capable even of presiding at a session of the assizes at Mauléon?" A man whom we've had so much trouble to condemn! And to sacrifice me for this trifle! Oh, no! Find some other way, my good sir. That is not the one that you will employ, I guarantee you.

Vag. I will find another, but I will not leave things as they are.

Att. Gen. Do what you like, but acknowledge that I have not given you any advice either one way or the other.

Vag. I acknowledge it.

Judge. When you have decided to resume the hearing let us know.

Vag. I shall let you know.

Att. Gen. [*to the* JUDGE]. We'll leave him. [*They go out.*

Madame Vagret comes in to find her husband. He tells her how he was carried away by the excitement of the contest and went too far in damning a man of whose guilt he was doubtful. He was swayed by anger against the other lawyer whom he hated for the moment with his whole strength. His success was greater than he intended. Now the jury is ready to obey him. He permitted himself to be congratulated, and shook the hands that were stretched out to him.

Vag. That is what it means to be a prosecutor.

Mme. Vagret. Console yourself. Probably there are not ten in France who would have done differently.

Vag. You are right. Only . . . If one reflects, that is precisely what is so frightful.

The acquittal of Etchepare relieves the Judge of all fear that a false ruling may be detected. Vagret accuses him flatly of having done an infamous thing in revealing to Etchepare that his wife had been sentenced for receiving stolen goods, and that she had been seduced before he married her.

The Judge takes a certain satisfaction in telling Vagret that Mouzon has received the appointment to the Counselorship.

The law has still another hold on Yanetta. She is charged with having abused a magistrate engaged in the discharge of his duty.

Etchepare and his mother meet in the Prosecutor's office. As he takes her tenderly in his arms he says she has been greatly changed by the sorrows of the last three months. Then he begins immediately to execrate Yanetta as a thief and a wretch. When he heard the Judge say that she had been condemned as the accomplice of her lover it seemed as if the sky had fallen upon his head. If it had not been for his mother and the children he would have declared that he was guilty. When he asks if she has left the children at home she tells him that they have been ruined and no longer have any home or farm, and that she could not stay any longer in a place where every one shunned them.

Yanetta comes in. Etchepare will not look at her, and his mother turns her eyes away from Yanetta as she goes out.

Yan. [*takes a few steps toward her husband, falls on her knees and clasps her hands. In a low voice*]. Forgive me!

Etch. Never!

Yan. No, don't say that!

Etch. Did the Judge lie?

Yan. No, the Judge did not lie.

Etch. You are a bad woman!

Yan. Yes, I am a bad woman, forgive me!

Etch. Forgive you! I would like to kill you!

Yan. Yes, yes, but forgive me!

Etch. You are nothing but a wench, a Paris wench without shame or morals!

Yan. Yes, insult me, strike me!

Etch. You have lived a lie to me for ten years!

Yan. Oh! How I wanted to tell you all! Oh! How many times I commenced that terrible confession! I never had the courage, Peter; I was always afraid of your anger and of the pain I would cause you . . . You were so happy!

Etch. You came back fresh from vice, just out of prison, and took me for your victim . . .

Yan. And to think that he believes that, my God!

Etch. You came to me—the leavings of a thief . . . and you stole in my house the place of a good woman . . . Your lie has brought the curse of God on my family, and you are the cause of it all. The misfortune which has just stricken us was caused by you, I tell you! You leper! Accursed! Damned! Don't talk to me any more! Don't talk to me any more!

Yan. Won't you have pity, Peter? Do you think that I don't suffer!

Etch. If you do you deserve it! What had I done to you that you should choose me for your victim? What have I done to suffer as I do? You have made a coward of me! You have degraded me almost to your own level; I ought already to have succeeded in putting you out of my head and my heart. And I cannot! And I suffer terribly . . . for I suffer in the love which I bore you . . . You! You have been all in my life for ten years . . . you have been all, all! . . . And I have nothing but one hope left—to forget you!

Yan. Forgive me!

Etch. Never, never!

Yan. Don't say that . . . it is only God who has the right to say that. I will come back to your house; I shall only be the first of the servants . . . the most humble, if you wish! I shall not take my place at the fireside until you tell me to . . .

Etch. We haven't any fireside, we haven't any home . . . we have nothing now! And I repeat it, it is all your fault . . . and it is because you used to sit there in the place of the mother, of my mother, you! false and faithless! that misfortune has fallen upon us!

Yan. I swear to you that I will make you forget all that by my humility, my devotion, and my repentance . . . and wherever you go I shall follow you; Pierre, reflect, your children still need me . . .

Etch. My children! You shall never see them again! Nor speak to them! I won't have you kiss them, nor even touch them!

Yan. [*changing her tone*]. Not that! Not that! The children! You are mistaken there! Ah, no! Deprive me of all, condemn me to every shame, force me to beg

my bread—I am quite willing! Don't even look at me, don't speak to me except to insult me . . . anything you like . . . but my children! My children! They belong to me: they came from my womb; they are still a part of me . . . and always, always will be my flesh and blood. . . . You can cut off one of my arms—it would be a dead thing and not a part of me . . . but you can't keep my children from being my children . . .

Etch. You have made yourself unworthy of keeping them . . .

Yan. Unworthy! Don't talk that to me! Have I ever failed in my duties toward them? Have I been a bad mother? Answer! I haven't, have I? Well, if I haven't been a bad mother, my rights upon my children remain entire and absolute! Unworthy! I could be a thousand times more guilty! More unworthy, as you say, and still neither you, nor the law, nor priests, nor God would have the right to take them from me. . . . As a woman I may have been guilty—it is possible . . . as mother, nobody can accuse me of anything. . . . Well, then! Well, then! They cannot be stolen from me . . . and you who have this project . . . you are a scoundrel! Yes! Yes! To avenge yourself you wish to take them from me! You coward! You are only a man! Father! You don't know what the word means! You have no thought for your children. . . . Yes! Yes! You lie, I tell you! When you say that I am unworthy of bringing them up you lie! Those are only words, words! You know it is not true; you know well enough that I have nourished them, cared for them, loved them, counseled them, and that I used to have them say their prayers every evening and that I would continue. . . . You know well that no woman could fill my place with them . . . but what do you care for all that! You forget them . . . you want to punish me and so you are going to take them from me. . . . I have the right to tell you that it is cowardly and mean and is only a horrible vengeance! Ah! Ah! The children! Now he wants to lug them in!! No! Take them from me? Ah, just think, Peter, it is impossible, what you are saying!

Etch. You have spoken truly—I am avenging myself.

What you say is impossible is already done. My mother has taken the children and has gone off with them.

Yan. I will find them again.

Etch. America is large.

Yan. I shall find them again!

Etch. Then I shall tell them why I took them from you.

Yan. Never! That, never! I will obey you, but swear to me . . .

Enter the CLERK.

Clerk. Come and sign your release, Etchepare. You will be released at once.

Yan. Wait, sir, wait! [*To* ETCHEPARE.] I accept the separation since I must . . . I will disappear. . . . You will never hear of me again. But, in return for this atrocious sacrifice, swear to me a solemn oath that you will never tell them . . .

Etch. I swear it . . .

Yan. You swear never to tell them a word which might diminish their affection for me?

Etch. I swear it . . .

Yan. Promise me also—I implore you, Peter, in the name of our happiness, and of my suffering—promise me to keep alive in them the memory of their mother. . . . you will have them pray for me, won't you?

Etch. I swear it to you . . . .

Yan. Then go, my life is over . . . .

Etch. Good-bye.

[*Goes out with the* CLERK. *On the threshold of the door the latter meets* MOUZON.]

Clerk [*to* ETCHEPARE]. They will show you the way out . . . The Etchepare woman is here. . . . .

Mou. So she is here! Vagret has just spoken to me of her. Well, I withdraw my complaint; I ask nothing better than to release her. Now that I am Counsellor, I have no desire to come back from Pau every week for the examination. Proceed with the necessary formalities. [*To* YANETTA.] Well, in consideration of the disciplinary confinement which you have undergone, I am willing to release you provisionally . . . perhaps I shall even withdraw my complaint if you apologize for having insulted me . . .

Yan. I do not regret having insulted you.

Mou. Do you want to go back to prison?

Yan. Ah, my poor man, if you only knew how little I care for your prison!

Mou. How so?

Yan. Because I have nothing left, neither house nor home, nor husband nor children. [*Looks at him.*] And it occurs to me, the more I think of it . . .

Mou. What?

Yan. That it is you who are the cause of all the trouble.

Mou. You have both of you been acquitted, haven't you? What more do you want?

Yan. Yes, we have been acquitted, it is true. But now for my husband, for my children, for everybody, I am a bad woman just the same.

Mou. If any one throws up to you your former conviction, if any one makes allusion to your disciplinary detention, you have the right to prosecute the slanderer before the law. He will be punished.

Yan. Well! It is because some one has thrown up to me my conviction that my husband has taken away my children . . . this some one is a judge—can I have him sentenced?

Mou. No.

Yan. Why? Because he is a magistrate?

Mou. No. Because it is the law.

Yan. The law! [*Violently.*] Well! Your law is contemptible.

Mou. Come, now, no shrieks nor insults, please. [*To the* CLERK.] Are you through? Then go to the office and get an order for her release.

Yan. For me I am not learned: I have not studied the law as you have out of books, and perhaps for that very reason I know what is just and what is not. And I have come to ask you simply this: how does the law propose to give me back my children and undo the wrong it has done me?

Mou. The law is not beholden to you.

Yan. Not beholden to me? Then what are you going to do about it? You, the judge?

Mou. A magistrate is not responsible.

Yan. Ah, you are not responsible! Then you could, just for a whim, arrest people, on a shadow of suspicion,

even without suspicion; you might bring shame and dishonor on whole families, torture the unhappy, dig down deep into their existence, parade their misfortunes, bring to light forgotten and expiated faults, faults which go back ten years; you might, by your cunning, your tricks, your lies, and your cruelty, send a man to the foot of the scaffold, and, what is worse, rob a mother of her little ones! And after that, like Pontius Pilate, you would say and would believe that you were not responsible! Not responsible! Before your law you may not be responsible, as you say, but before justice itself, before the justice of decent people, before God's own justice, I swear to you that you are responsible and that is why I have come to bring you to account!

[*Sees upon the desk of* MOUZON, *whose back is turned, the dagger used as a paper-cutter. Seizes it and lays it down again.*]

Mou. I order you to go.

Yan. Listen to me . . . for the last time, I ask you what you are going to do to relieve me, to return to me all that I have lost through your fault; what are you going to do to lessen my anguish, and how do you propose to get my children back for me?

Mou. I have nothing to say to you; I owe you nothing.

Yan. You owe me nothing! You owe me more than life, more than everything . . . My children . . . I shall never see them . . . what you have taken from me is the happiness of every minute, it is their kisses every evening, it is the pride which I had in watching them grow. Never, never again, shall I hear them say mamma! It is as if they were dead! It is just the same as if you had killed them. [*Seizes the knife.*] Yes! Now look at your work, all you wicked judges: of an innocent man you almost made a criminal, and of an honest woman, of a mother, you have made a murderess!

[*Strikes him; he falls.*]

THE TORCH RACE

By Paul Hervieu

First played in Paris at the Théâtre du Vaudeville on April 17, 1901.

Argument: In order not to impair her daughter's matrimonial chances, Mme. Revel, a widow, refuses a suitor whom she loves, only to find that her daughter has already promised herself to a young man. Later, yielding to her daughter's entreaties, she appeals to her former suitor for aid to save her son-in-law from ruin, and her daughter being ordered to the mountains to ward off consumption, she takes with them her mother, who is suffering from a weak heart, rather than distress her daughter with explanations. Was her own self-sacrifice irremediable, and does the sacrifice of her mother prove fatal?

Marie-Jeanne's eighteenth birthday is an occasion of more than usual importance, for it is the day on which she has promised to inform her mother that she and Didier Maravon wish to marry. She has insisted upon a long delay so that her attitude should not seem unreflecting, and in spite of the sympathy between her mother and herself, which has been all the closer as Mme. Revel is a widow, she has guarded her secret carefully from any betrayal. As soon as the guests have gone, she assures her impatient suitor, she will undertake to win her mother's approval. Didier leaves the house, feeling unequal to disguising his suspense before the company.

Some of the guests have already gone when Mme. Revel, or Sabine as she is called by her intimate friends, comes into the drawing-room with Didier's father. She asks M. Maravon if he has noticed how Mme. Gribert sacrifices herself to her daughter. She thinks it rather odious to see a girl set up as an idol.

Maravon. I do not share your opinion, my dear friend. On the other hand, I like to see the simple machinery of family life performing its functions among these people who are so unaffectedly natural. They conform to the law which begins by asking of the mother flesh of her flesh, often her beauty, her health, if necessary even her life, to constitute the child. Thenceforth nature exerts herself to despoil the old generation for the succeeding one. It demands of the ascendants without truce, in the form of expense, labor, worry, endowments, sacrifices, all that remains of their vital forces, to equip, arm, and prepare those who descend toward the plain of the future. See my own case. It was a question of creating a position for my son. Didier soon persuaded me that my substance would be better placed henceforth in his hands, which had become virile. And to demonstrate to you that Mme. Gribert and her daughter follow the purest classical tradition, if you will excuse pedantry in an old university student, I will draw my argument from antiquity——

Sabine. Don't inconvenience yourself!

Mar. Very likely you have never heard of the lampadephoria? This is what it was. The citizens of Athens formed themselves in lines with intervals between them. The first lit a torch at the altar, ran and gave it to a second, who transmitted it to a third, and so it went on from hand to hand. Each competitor ran without looking back, having for object only to preserve the flame and remit it as quickly as possible to another. And then, dispossessed, brought to a stop, watching the twinkling of the sacred flame in the distance, he escorted it with his eyes, with all his impotent anxiety and useless vows. The very image of the generations of life has been recognized in the torch race, not by me, but by my very ancient friends, Plato and the good poet Lucretius.

It seems to Sabine that the one who receives life is under obligation to the one who gives it. Maravon replies that the children acquit their debt to nature in turn by having children. And filial gratitude, he declares, is not spontaneous but a product of civilization, an effort at virtue.

Sab. But you will permit me to cite my own case against you? Living as I do with my mother and my daughter, I think I am in a position to know what it means to love one's

child. I am certain that I should not hesitate to sacrifice my life to spare Marie-Jeanne serious unhappiness, but I cherish my mother spontaneously also, without going back to this far-fetched explanation that you would like to set up. And to save my mother from peril, I assure you, I would give my life with equal readiness.

This view is a tender illusion, according to M. Maravon, who tells Sabine that she does not even know herself, how good a mother she might be and how bad a daughter.

From M. Gribert Sabine learns that her old friend, M. Stangy, who is an American, has taken a sudden resolve to return to his own country. A moment later Stangy stands before her. In explanation, he tells her that from the moment she refused to become his wife no other course was open to him than to depart. When he came to Paris it was to make a short visit. Finding that she was a widow, he has remained nearly a year courting her. Time and again she has put him off, refusing him a definite answer, until he can bear it no longer. In order to compel himself to go and bury himself in work he has invested his fortune in a great plantation in Louisiana. He has committed himself to this venture, his new responsibilities will preclude his return to France, and now he must start in half an hour to catch his steamship. Sabine's reply is that he must cable a counter-order, preventing the investment. He is determined, however, to deliver himself from the torment of her fascination.

Sab. Oh, you constrain me to explain, to unmask myself, before the event that I had looked forward to. Have I really been so hypocritical, or rather have you been so blind that you have not seen that my feelings responded to yours?

Stangy. What? I am not indifferent to you? You love me? You say that you love me? Is that really what you said?

She confesses that it was her design to put him off, while holding him, until her daughter should be married, not only since she feared sacrificing Marie-Jeanne's happiness by dividing her love, but also because in the eyes of society the prospects for Marie-Jeanne's inheritance would be reduced by half, two thirds, or even three quarters by her mother's marriage. She is unwilling to run the risk of

doing any injury to her daughter, of causing her any affliction. She declares that she disapproves sentimental weakness on the part of mothers, but that this is a case of plain maternal honesty.

Sab. Don't look at me so severely, as if I were a culprit.

Stan. How much longer do you still propose to keep me waiting?

Sab. Good heavens! Now you are being bad again!

Stan. You have demonstrated to me clearly enough that you love your daughter quite differently from the way you love me.

Sab. Why make comparisons? I love both of you. Oh, listen to me. How could I fix a date? If I should say a year . . . I should be giving the lie to all I wish for the welfare of Marie-Jeanne, and even to that which I wish for myself, if I dare say so. Would you have me thrust her prematurely into the arms of a man? When she leaves me of her own accord I shall be torn harshly enough. Oh, remain near me and sustain me, console me, intoxicate me!

Stan. I shall not subject myself further, and for an indeterminate length of time, to languishing in this humiliating and insupportable way. My soul has been too greatly exasperated. Hasten to cure it, or I shall go and care for it in the way that I have devised.

A servant enters to announce that a carriage has come for M. Stangy. Stangy tells Sabine that he must begin to work again while he is still young enough to do it with dignity and to have the energy it requires. In work, he says, is his resurrection. She beseeches him not to create an irreparable chasm between them.

Stan. My last word is this: I wish to have you, but I will wait no longer.

Sab. And I am reduced to giving you the same reply: if there were only one possibility in the world of my marriage raising up some obstacle to the marriage of my daughter, it would be too much. It would taint all my joy with remorse.

Stan. When I go out of this door if it is not to go to the telegraph office and release myself from my new enterprise, all will be over between us. You cannot call me back. I shall not know how to find the means of returning.

Sab. I have told you all that I think, all that I feel.

You crush my heart without destroying the idea that I am doing my duty. I haven't the right! . . . I haven't the right! . . . I haven't the right! . . .

Stan. Good-bye!

Sab. Oh, don't go yet!

Stan. I must be in the train in twenty minutes.

Sab. You will not let me be without word? You will write?

Stan. No letters. If you address any to me I shall not open them. Take a rest from me, and I will rest from you.

Sab. You will come back? I shall see you again?

Stan. Never! [*Goes toward door.*]

Sab. Oh! Oh! Stangy!

Stan. [*ready to come back*]. What?

Sab. [*after an inward struggle*]. No! . . . Really! . . . Nothing! [*She drops on a chair.*] Oh, Marie-Jeanne!

Stangy goes out.

Scarcely is Sabine alone when Marie-Jeanne comes to find her. Upon glancing at her mother's face, Marie-Jeanne inquires if she is ill. Sabine replies that she is upset, but that if Marie-Jeanne will kiss her and assure her of her love she will feel all right again. Marie-Jeanne then comes to the confidence which she has to make, that she and Didier love each other. Sabine is startled, but treats the affair as if it were not serious. Marie-Jeanne, however, is very determined. She says that she and Didier wish to be married, that she has promised him an immediate reply, and that her happiness or unhappiness depends upon the outcome.

Sabine calls her mother, Mme. Fontenais, to reason with Marie-Jeanne. Mme. Fontenais admits to Marie-Jeanne that Sabine was married at eighteen, but being of a very cautious nature advises waiting until Didier has established his social position and begun to be prosperous. When the time comes for Marie-Jeanne to marry, she says, she will insist upon her dowry being so safeguarded that neither she nor her husband can touch anything but the income from it. She believes that this condition would be likely to make the aspirant withdraw, but Marie-Jeanne declares that Didier will accept any conditions with his

eyes shut. Mme. Fontenais has no further objections to raise and Sabine, bursting into tears, gives her consent.

Marie-Jeanne and Didier have made their home at Boulogne-sur-Seine where his factory is situated. Four years after their marriage he faces a crisis in his business. A silent partner, acting in bad faith, has withdrawn his capital, and one of Didier's largest customers has suddenly failed. He requires an immediate loan of 300,000 francs, but the bankers on whom he has relied will not come to his rescue in this emergency. The only expedient remaining is to draw upon Marie-Jeanne's fortune. Her income would be sufficient for their maintenance in case of failure, but aside from the humiliation which this event would cause Didier, he cannot reconcile himself to allowing others to suffer through him. His father has been to Sabine to present the situation to her.

Sabine and Mme. Fontenais come at once to the family council. Sabine hastens on ahead of her mother from the railroad station and has a brief talk with Didier alone in which she assures him of her confidence and her desire to avert the peril. Having obtained fuller details from him, she asks him to leave her to make a more complete explanation to her mother. As soon as Mme. Fontenais enters Sabine goes straight to the point, saying that it has devolved upon her to make the great appeal to her mother's generosity.

Mme. Fontenais. I don't suppose they expect 300,000 francs from me.

Sab. It is asked only as an advance. The capital will not be lost. It will be invested.

Mme. F. In good hands, if I may judge by the state in which Didier's affairs are.

Sab. Have this situation studied by competent persons, ones in whom you have confidence. No one asks you to do anything without a full understanding.

Mme. F. No! . . . I shall not enter upon this course. I shall not let myself be drawn into any of these examinations which end only in deceptive mirages. That was the way in which your husband cost us nearly five hundred thousand francs. We were worth a million and a quarter when M. Fontenais retired after twenty-five

years of labor. What have I left after giving Marie-Jeanne a dowry of a hundred and fifty thousand francs? Something like six hundred and fifty thousand francs. Well, that is not too much. It just enables me to keep you all decently.

Sab. You talk of living decently. That is just the question. I must say that even if you involved half of your actual property for the sake of your grandchildren, it would be a risk from which it would not be a good act to exempt yourself. It is a question of protecting the name which Marie-Jeanne bears from the scandal of a judicial liquidation. You understand, don't you? You hadn't thought of that outcome, I'm sure, when you began by opposing me with a flat refusal. I hadn't thought of it myself until Didier opened my eyes. The instinct of us women is not so quick as that of men to perceive a point of honor.

Mme. F. Yes, I know that. In an emergency these gentlemen say to us: "My honor! . . . Your sex lacks the nicety of ours. To rehabilitate our masculine honor, which we have staked, give us merely your feminine money."

Sab. You would speak less severely if you had seen the noble indignation with which Didier just now repelled the thought of not honoring his obligations. He gave me to understand that he would kill himself.

Mme. F. Ah! I know that story, too! Your husband, they concealed it from you, used to resort to veiled threats and the menace of suicide. Your father gave money to him and gave money to him. Then, when he had got away with half a million and began again to talk of putting an end to his days, M. Fontenais said to himself: "Well! . . . Well! . . ." Well, he never killed himself, poor simple soul.

Sab. Mamma! He is dead.

Mme. F. Yes, he died of pleurisy one fine day!

Sabine wishes to believe that Didier would not make her daughter a widow, but she draws a pitiful picture of their being dispossessed from their home. Mme. Fontenais is fixed in her determination to safeguard the future of all of them in the way she thinks best. It is in vain that Sabine begs her for a part of the sum required. Mme.

Fontenais tells her that she promised her husband on his deathbed that she would never risk what was left of the fortune that he had won at the expense of such long and loving labor.

Sab. But listen to me!

Mme. F. No, the discussion is closed.

Sab. I beg you, listen to me.

Mme. F. Come, stand aside.

Sab. You will not go back on one pitiless word?

Mme. F. This struggle has made me ill.

Sab. Me, too.

Mme. F. I need to take the air.

Sab. [*barring the way*]. You shall presently.

Mme. F. Let me go out in the garden and breathe.

Sab. [*breaking out*]. You shall breathe, mamma, when my daughter has been rescued.

Mme. F. Sabine! How are you speaking to me?

Sab. [*drawing back*]. Yes! I was lacking in respect. It is because this is the first discord between us. I did not recognize you, and I no longer recognize myself.

Marie-Jeanne can hardly believe that her grandmother will not save her husband from ruin, but convinced at last by Sabine implores the latter to appeal to friends.

Sab. I cannot go to any one and say: "How much will you put in? My mother won't put in anything!"

Marie-Jeanne. We have no choice of means. We must try it.

Sab. Such friends hardly exist, and we haven't any.

Mar.-J. You have a friend, mother . . . who is very rich . . . who loves you greatly . . .

Sab. I?

Mar.-J. A friend who wanted to marry you.

Sab. Oh, Marie-Jeanne! . . . Do not recall that memory at a moment when I am so unnerved, so pained. The friend to whom you allude I no longer have. I do not know where he is, what has become of him.

At the time of Marie-Jeanne's marriage Sabine wrote to Stangy of it, and her letter came back unopened. Marie-Jeanne, however, says that his vexation must have long been over, and she looks up his name in a foreign commercial directory. She insists that he is the providential person upon whom their salvation devolves. Sabine, on the

contrary, feels that she would degrade herself by appealing to Stangy and destroy what good opinion he might still have of her. She would appear to be trying to extort money from him by recalling the memory of a sacred sentiment. The view that Marie-Jeanne takes of this attitude is that her mother, in refusing to write the letter that she might, is putting herself in the same position as her grandmother, who refuses to give the money that she possesses.

Mar.-J. Instead of his having become a stranger to whom you do not dare to appeal he might have been here with his fortune, and might have helped me in the capacity of a father-in-law.

Sab. Do you accuse me of having wronged you?

Mar.-J. Oh, I don't accuse you. If you made a mistake I know that you did it through excess of affection for me. But I am engrossed with the idea that we are not accomplishing anything, that I must go back to my Didier empty-handed, instead of being able to say: "Hope! This has already been done." Then, thinking of the exaggerated sacrifice which you saw fit to make at another time, I cannot help perceiving that now it rebounds on my destiny.

Sab. Very well, Marie-Jeanne, if you look at it that way I will try to repair the injury that you lay at my door.

Mar.-J. Oh, mother dear, I am afraid I cannot regret my words, as they have given me something to thank you for once again. We are both overlooking what chance you may have of succeeding, but among the vows I shall make the thought comes to me of how I can recompense you for your pain.

Sab. I have undertaken to act without the least hope of recompense.

Mar.-J. But let me tell you of the little idea which your agitation just now suggested to me. This friend who is so much dearer to you than I ever suspected, and whom you renounced through motherly tenderness, may be brought back to you by your daughter in making you write this letter.

Sab. Do you imagine that Stangy would come back? What can suggest such a supposition to you? What madness! I will admit that he might wish well by me, that he might lend himself obligingly to disposing of the embar-

rassment of which I shall inform him . . . But that is all!

Marie-Jeanne hands her mother a mirror and asks her to assure herself that she is still as young-looking and as charming as when Stangy went away. Sabine is unwilling to look in the mirror at first, but presently, while writing, she turns to the glass and thinks that perhaps she is not much changed.

The demands upon Mme. Fontenais have not come to an end with Didier's failure. The creditors have refused to consent to his discharge in bankruptcy unless his assets are increased by the sum of 100,000 francs. Mme. Fontenais' home, where Didier and Marie-Jeanne have come to live, is the centre of a constant storm in which the grandmother holds out against the others. Even Maravon is pitted against her, but she holds firm. Marie-Jeanne's health has suffered since she began to share Didier's anxiety, and finally, after a violent scene which ended in Mme. Fontenais breaking with the others, Marie-Jeanne was seized with an alarming fainting spell.

The doctor determined that Marie-Jeanne was a prey to some fixed idea which must be eradicated before there could be any improvement in her condition. All night they watched over her anxiously. In the morning when Sabine entered Marie-Jeanne's room she was evidently deeply moved, and going to her daughter and embracing her she told her to worry no more, that the money for Didier's discharge had been provided. Marie-Jeanne's improvement was instantaneous. Sitting up, she cried: "You have heard from M. Stangy! Ah, you see that my idea was a good one!" Sabine's only reply was to tell her to wait, and that she was going out to get the 100,000 francs.

Two hours elapse before Sabine's return. The doctor has called again, and Maravon is waiting in the parlor to hear his report. He is struck by Sabine's wild and haggard look as she comes into the room. Impatient to confirm what he has heard about the hope of relief, he asks if an answer has come from Stangy at last, after two months. It is not only true that Stangy has not written, she informs him, but furthermore nothing else has happened

which can bring relief. She does not wish to be questioned. Changing the subject abruptly, she reminds him of a conversation they once had in that room in which he maintained that the principles of nature compelled parents to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their offspring. She asks how he reconciles Mme. Fontenais' attitude with this theory. His answer is that the instinctive forces are weakened as people grow old.

Sab. Then why should a person who no longer has all the natural feelings enjoy all the rights of the individual? In all justice, shouldn't my mother's senile inhumanity authorize me to declare her incapable of managing her own affairs, to dispossess her, to take charge of her property and make salutary use of it? Isn't it monstrous that the soaring of two young lives should be held fettered in agony by hands that are already nearly cold? Say that it is intolerable! Say that anything is permissible against it! . . . Say it! Will you say it?

Mar. My poor friend, you charge me with having been a bad prophet the day I told you that filial piety would not stand the test. And as if fate intended to prove it to you to-day, your civilized soul reverts suddenly to the level of the Redskin. You speak of your mother's old hands in the spirit of savages who make the head of the family climb up in a tree and then shake the tree to see whether he can hang on or can only drop.

Sab. No, do not make me think that I am contemplating the idea of my mother's death. Oh, no! That would be a misfortune for which I am not prepared. I haven't got to that.

Mar. If you haven't got so far as that, how far have you got?

Sab. What's that? Your tone is so odd. . . . Why do you look into the depths of my eyes like that? It isn't hard to ask me what I have done, if you guess.

Mar. I do not guess.

Sab. But it seems as if you must be reading my thoughts. You were just comparing me to a savage. What do savages do when necessity demands, and the object is within reach? Well, I thought that my daughter was drawing her last breath. I had helped carry her body, which had lost half its weight. I had seen her sink on her pillow and

collapse again from weakness. Then, since the only remedy in the world had been named by the doctor, I could do nothing but take it from the drawer in which my mother keeps her securities.

Mar. You did it!

Sab. Yes, I did!

Mar. Oh!

Sab. You who have sympathized as deeply as I with our children will believe that if I have restrained myself for so long from pouring out what is stifling me, it is not because I am ashamed of my act, for I only should be for being foiled.

Mar. What have you done? What have you done?

Sab. I am going to tell you. I will tell you all. Listen . . . I did not premeditate it. I had never thought of it before last night. All at once the idea came to me at the bedside of Marie-Jeanne. It was four o'clock in the morning. My resolution was instantly taken. I left the chair where I was watching, left the room, and went in there . . . Mamma uttered a cry. It was nothing. She was dreaming . . . I groped my way to the window . . . drew the curtains apart far enough to admit a ray of dawn . . . and then to work! If mamma had waked up, if she had interrupted me, had cried out, I should have raised my voice more authoritatively to silence her and said that I did not mean to let my daughter lose her mind or her life. I took the bunch of keys from the marble top of the commode and opened the bureau. I passed back and forth between the hiding-place of the securities and the streak of light with the stealth of a wolf, trying to make my choice between the papers. And from time to time mamma spoke in a hoarse voice, excited by her nightmare. Several times she cried out: "Ah! Ah!" so loudly that I was afraid I had waked her, but no, she was asleep . . . I inspire you with horror?

Mar. I cannot define what I feel . . . I do not judge you at the present moment. Go on to the end.

At last Sabine selected some registered debenture bonds. She had gone once or twice with her mother and witnessed the formalities of converting such certificates into money. After practising for several hours she succeeded in writing a demand for the conversion of the paper in what seemed

to her a perfect imitation of her mother's handwriting, signing it with her mother's name. The officer in the bank to whom she had to apply was an old friend of her father's, and already knew about Didier's affairs. Sabine told him that her mother wished to liquidate the young man's liabilities, but was ill herself and could not leave the house.

The official was very cordial and obliging and immediately provided the cash on the securities, for which she signed a receipt. Having tucked the hundred thousand francs in her corsage and said good morning, she was opening the door when he suddenly asked her to wait, saying that she had made the mistake of signing the receipt with her mother's name. In consternation she looked at the receipt and found that she had counterfeited her mother's signature again. At the same moment the official looked at the application once more and detected the forgery. She threw herself on her knees and begged him not to take the money from her. The plea was in vain, but he consented to give her time to seek her mother's forgiveness and to persuade her to come on the errand herself.

Maravon points out the danger that threatens from having given Marie-Jeanne false hopes. Sabine is determined to prolong the illusion at any cost, and to tell whatever lies may be necessary.

The doctor has diagnosed Marie-Jeanne's condition as nervous exhaustion combined with the first symptoms of consumption, but he says that her constitution still has plenty of resources and that if she spends the summer at a high altitude in the mountains he thinks her health will be restored. As her nervous condition is a sort of hypochondria, due to mental strain, he says it is necessary to humor her and make everything as agreeable as possible. The doctor also warns Sabine against taking Mme. Fontenais to the mountains, which would be bad for her heart.

Doctor. Her heart is not equal to the strain that would be put upon it by the rarefication of the atmosphere at a high altitude. At that height the heart has to work four times as hard to supply the ordinary amount of blood, which is dangerous if the arteries are not sufficiently supple. This should not alarm you about Mme. Fontenais. She may live indefinitely in Paris, in the air of the plains. But

to expose her to the respiratory strain of a high altitude would be equivalent to stabbing her with a knife.

Sab. That's important to know.

Doctor. One word more. Cardiac patients are very impressionable. If Mme. Fontenais asks your reasons, do not give her the true one.

When the doctor has gone Mme. Fontenais comes into the parlor, somewhat to Sabine's surprise, but Mme. Fontenais says she has not been thrown out to the dogs yet. She expresses regret for the hard words that have been exchanged, and that Marie-Jeanne should have been made ill because she could not have her way. Mme. Fontenais, however, volunteers to defray the expenses of the visit to the mountains, which Maravon has told her is prescribed by the doctor.

Sab. I thank you.

Mme. F. You are sulky. Do you cherish great bitterness against me? Perhaps you despise me?

Sab. I haven't the right.

Mme. F. Nevertheless, I know there is no one but myself who loves you.

Sab. Ah, if I did not have Marie-Jeanne's tenderness to console me I should hardly feel as if I were loved at all.

Mme. F. Have confidence in the clairvoyance that has come to me: I have no one but you. Your vision takes in no one but your daughter; and your daughter thinks only of her husband. . . . What she loves the most surely in you is that you make common cause with the man whom she loves against me. Beware the day when you will no longer be in accord with her conjugal love. Then you will find it definitely established for you in your turn what it means to be only a mother.

They revert to the matter of the journey, and Sabine says that it would be fatiguing for Mme. Fontenais to go to Switzerland and would upset all her habits. Mme. Fontenais is all the more anxious to be with Sabine as much as she can for the very reason that she is no longer young and that the end is not so far away. Sabine replies that she is obliged to say she does not wish to have her mother come, since she will have to devote herself so much to Marie-Jeanne and since it would really be better for her mother to remain in Paris. Mme. Fontenais can see in this atti-

tude only a desire to get rid of her and have no one to mar the perfect accord of the rest of the household, but she says that she will not consent to being left alone, and will either accompany them or insist upon Sabine remaining with her. The purse strings being in her hands, there seems to be nothing left for Sabine to do but choose between these alternatives.

As Marie-Jeanne comes in, supported by Didier, Mme. Fontenais leaves the room. Marie-Jeanne asks her mother immediately if she has the 100,000 francs, and sinks down with a gesture of despair when Sabine replies that there has been a slight delay. Didier says that if she can promise the sum within a certain time he will tell his creditors at their meeting at noon, and they will give him his discharge at once. Sabine stammeringly replies that he may count on her, permitting them to believe that Stangy has come to her aid.

The idea of not having her mother to coddle her when she is ailing is not at all agreeable to Marie-Jeanne. So far as she can see it is much more feasible to bring her grandmother along than to leave her mother at home. This opposition to her wishes makes her quite feverish again, and Sabine is distracted. Didier has to go to the meeting of his creditors and asks Sabine what delay he shall ask them for, reminding her that if he does not make the payment which he is going to promise all future possibility of rehabilitating himself will vanish. Sabine does not know what to say.

Mar.-J. Oh, if Didier should fall into the grasp of those wretches again it would kill me.

Sab. [*in anguish*]. Will you be good enough not to utter such words!

Did. Any engagement that I enter into is of supreme importance. If you feel a shade of uncertainty you must not let me guarantee to pay.

Sabine is silent.

Mar.-J. [*drawing herself up, dismayed*]. Mother, why don't you answer?

Sab. Why, yes! . . . Don't get up on your high horse. Didier confused me for a moment . . .

Mar.-J. [*falling back weakly*]. Ah!

Sab. [*distracted*]. Come! Good heavens! You aren't

going to faint again! . . . There! There! Where are the salts? Breathe, my child! Breathe! [*To* DIDIER.] Look, for no reason at all she turned deathly pale again! It seemed as if I saw her dead. Oh, no, you shan't die. The whole earth shall perish before I will let you die! . . Marie-Jeanne, do you hear? . . . She has opened her eyes . . . . My darling daughter, listen to what I am telling Didier. [*To him.*] Go and take the step boldly that will restore the strength to this poor little body. I will take upon myself entire responsibility for the agreement that you are going to sign. In so far as it is within human power to keep a promise I engage myself to keep mine.

Didier goes out, and the next moment Mme. Fontenais enters.

Mme. F. Well, what have you arrived at between mother and daughter? Am I to take the journey?

Sab. [*replying with a motion of her head more than her voice*]. Yes.

Sabine has hardly established herself in a chalet in the Engadine when Stangy comes to call. He has been sojourning there for some time, but hesitated to make his presence known until he received a letter from Sabine which had been following him for several months. Mme. Fontenais is the first to receive him, and he assures her that he wishes to justify the honor which Sabine has done him in counting on his friendship and aid. Mme. Fontenais has been taking a walk and has found the fresh, pure air intensely invigorating. She thinks that perhaps she has walked a little too far, and she reels slightly as she turns to go to her room for a rest.

Upon finding Stangy at the house, Sabine can hardly believe her senses. He has prospered and increased his fortune, and having no heir tells her that it is a great pleasure to him to offer her some relief. The subject is painful to her, and she says she will leave it to Didier to discuss with him. As she and her mother are going to return to Paris the next day she fears that she may not see much of him, and tells him that he already knows what he was to her and that she would tremble to repeat what she said to him at their last meeting.

Sab. Does not this meeting mean that I may yet be happy and perhaps give happiness? Will you not return to Paris? You surely have not forgotten the way to my house, where your image has always remained before my eyes.

Stan. I have come here to . . . I am detained here . . . for the health of my wife.

Sab. [*overcome*]. Your wife! . . . Oh!

Stan. You thought that I should remain in the loneliness of eternal fidelity?

Sab. Yes . . . No . . . I don't know!

A year after parting from Sabine Stangy married a cousin in Louisiana, and having lost his ideal, he expected to remain there for the rest of his life. He had a child that died only three months ago. Since then his wife has not wished to return home. He thinks that fate would have been kinder if he had received her letter and answered it from a distance so that they might have been spared the pain of this interview, but she tells him not to regret it, for she had often feared that she might die without ever seeing him again.

In Stangy's absence from home he requires some one in whom he can repose confidence to take charge of his affairs. It has occurred to him to offer the position to Didier, but he fears that it would not do to separate him from Marie-Jeanne while her health is still uncertain. Didier, in fact, says that he cannot leave her. The opportunity is so exceptional, however, that Marie-Jeanne will not hear of Didier's refusing it. Marie-Jeanne's health is already much improved, and as there is every prospect that she could rejoin him in America after a reasonable time, he accepts and agrees to start at the end of a week.

When Sabine learns of the plan she asks Marie-Jeanne if she thinks she is well enough to bear the separation so soon, but Marie-Jeanne replies that she has no intention of being separated from Didier. It was his adversity that had such a disastrous effect upon her, and now that fortune favors she feels sure that she will be speedily cured.

Sab. And I, where do I come in in this arrangement?

Mar.-J. You cannot take grandmother with us to such a distance, and you cannot abandon her.

Sab. So, your plan is already made, you have agreed to go in a week and live five thousand miles from me?

Mar.-J. Could I agree to being separated from my husband by five thousand miles?

Sab. Neither you nor he is forced to leave Paris. Good heavens, you aren't dying of want! Didier could find something else. How extravagant! You aren't really serious? You are just saying it to distract me. You wouldn't do such a fearful thing!

Mar.-J. You aren't going to oppose what is already settled? Oh, mother, don't destroy our magnificent hopes! You don't want to set us adrift again!

Sab. You don't love me! One loves only the person one prefers. One belongs to the preferred being, body and soul, from the moment of choosing him, and for his sake tramples the others under foot. Not loving others, loving them a little or loving them well, are only varying degrees of indifference. Oh, Marie-Jeanne, say that you didn't know what pain you would cause me, say that you will not tear yourself from my arms and place the immensity of this distance between us!

Marie-Jeanne regrets that she cannot cut herself in two, but she must follow her husband to the end of the world. She leaves Sabine, who calls Mme. Fontenais.

Mme. F. [*running in*]. What has happened? You frighten me!

Sab. Marie-Jeanne is going to leave me. In a short time I shall see her no more. Her husband is going to take her away, running after fortune in Stangy's country!

Mme. F. What are you telling me? It's some wild project, a fantasy that will pass away.

Sab. Oh, no! You would share my certainty if you had heard, if you had seen how determined Marie-Jeanne was. After so many indications that I could not count on her, she gave me a last and ineffaceable proof . . . What pain she caused me! What pain I feel! . . . Oh! Oh! Oh!

Mme. F. My dear Sabine, don't cry so! [SABINE'S *moans punctuate* MME. FONTENAIS' *words.*] Oh, your poor sobs agitate me so differently from your anger, against which perhaps I was too intractable and hard. . . . But what can I do to console you? . . . Come, I will

grant whatever is necessary . . . Yes! May your father pardon me if I am persuaded to betray my oath. Daughter, I will speak to your son-in-law. I will pay him his price to keep him and Marie-Jeanne!

Sab. They wouldn't listen to you. They are drunk with illusions. In their dream they see millions before them. Your entire resources would be too modest to-day to satisfy their new demands . . . They will go away, and I shall be forced to forget Marie-Jeanne. After the feeling of freezing me that she gave me, she would not be able to warm me again. I no longer have a daughter . . . I have only you. No doubt I have never really had any one but you, and I acted like a monster to you. Don't contradict me! Only let me promise a future prostrated before you, when I shall implore you to let me rest my head on your knees . . . What is the matter? What is the matter with you?

Mme. F. [*trying to rise*]. Ah! [*She falls.*]

Sab. Oh! Oh! No! It can't be that! . . . Speak to me! . . . Make a sign! . . . How she presses my hand! [SABINE *withdraws her hand violently.*] And her eyes! . . . Dead! . . . She is dead! . . . For my daughter . . . I have killed my mother!

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

By Octave Mirbeau

First played in Paris at the Comédie Française on April 20, 1903.

Argument: Isidore Lechat, a man of low origin, vulgar and gross, but endowed with great energy and cunning, has amassed an immense fortune by unscrupulous dealings and now sees an opportunity to double his capital. The first step in his plot is to gain political power by the marriage of his daughter, but the girl, revolted by his misdeeds, tells him she has become the mistress of one of his employees, and in addition to this blow, in the thick of the fight, his son whom he adored above everything is brought in dead, killed in a motor accident. Will his adversaries get the better of him, or will his instinct for "business" dominate him though stricken with grief and half stunned by the shock?

The château de Vauperdu with its park and surrounding estate is sumptuous enough to have been the property of Louis XIV, as claimed by the present owner, Isidore Lechat. In a setting of green lawns, terraces, fountains, and rose bushes, Mme. Lechat is sitting in a wicker armchair, muffled in laces, engaged in knitting. She is stout and overdressed, and her face is pale, flabby, and vulgar. Nearby is her daughter Germaine, reclining on a long garden chair with a book lying open on her knees. She is twenty-five, very pretty, with a supple figure and sad, ardent eyes, and dressed very simply, almost negligently.

It is six o'clock when a footman brings Mme. Lechat a telegram. A telegram always gives her stomach a turn, she says. The message is from her son Xavier, who is in Ostend and is going to breakfast at home the next day. Mme. Lechat is oppressed by her customary dread that

her husband will bring some one to dinner without warning, and as it is Saturday she is a prey to the additional apprehension that the guests may stay over night and need night shirts. She is half inclined to have a chicken killed, as the dinner consists of what was left over from the day before, but cannot make up her mind to risk the waste. She cannot see what Germaine is laughing at, and as for giving the remnants to the poor, she thinks it disgusting that there are so many in the neighborhood.

Germaine. Wherever there is a man who is too rich there must also be people who are too poor.

Mme. Lechat. We can't help that. And it is no reason for feeding them—with chicken. If they worked they wouldn't be so poor.

Ger. If they worked? At what?

Mme. L. How do you mean, at what?

Ger. We have taken everything from them, their little fields, their little houses, their little gardens, to round out what my father calls his domain. Those who could go away have gone.

Although the peasants have been paid for their property, Germaine says they have no way of earning their living. A moment later when her mother asks her to go down to the wine cellar she says that it is the duty of a servant, and that if her mother reposed more confidence in the servants they would steal less. Besides, they have stolen only a few bottles of wine, whereas certain persons whom she knows have—gained millions. She thinks her mother should not be angry, for she said "gained." But Mme. Lechat will not let this pass. She declares that her husband, with all his faults, vanity, extravagance, insolence, lying, and folly, never goes back on his word and does not like to cheat people.

Mme. L. He made his fortune by work. He has had luck, has been favored by circumstances, but has done more by skill and courage. If he has been bankrupt twice, hasn't he received his discharge? If he has been in prison . . . well, what of it? Wasn't he acquitted? Ah, he has had hard struggles, poor fellow. Others with less energy would have blown their brains out. He, no . . . At each fall he has got up to win more, to strive higher. He has founded a great paper, he who scarcely

knew how to write. Come, if your father was a rascal would he be the friend of a cabinet minister?

Ger. It becomes you, really, to reproach me so severely for what you do every day, complaining of father, laying bare his faults before every one, strangers even.

Mme. L. I . . . That isn't the same thing.

When Mme. Lechat has started off to the wine cellar the gardener comes forward and tells Germaine that he has been discharged because his wife is going to have a child, a fact that will make it difficult for him to find a new place, but M. Lechat will not have children around. Germaine knows that it would be useless for her to intercede. The gardener fears that she is not happy at Vauperdu, for he says she has too good a heart.

The shrill voice of Mme. Lechat is heard screaming at the servants, and then she reappears, descending a flight of stone steps. From the other direction comes Lucien Garraud, a chemist employed by Lechat to make special fertilizers. Mme. Lechat accuses Garraud of putting silly notions into her husband's head about revolutionizing agriculture, and being responsible for experiments that may cost thousands of francs. Garraud replies that M. Lechat is the author of the ideas, and that it frequently is the case that a great leader of industry, having extreme confidence in himself, the habit of domination and success, feels a constant need of creating something new and finds joy in struggling with obstacles. The earth, however, cannot be managed, he says, like the poor human soul. Mme. Lechat implores him to make her husband see this.

Suddenly shouts are heard. "Hurrah for Isidore Lechat!" "Hurrah for Citizen Isidore Lechat!" It is a new idea of the proprietor's to have the farmhands acclaim him with cheers whenever he approaches. Lechat appears presently from the direction of the driveway, throwing small coins to the laborers and telling them to shut up. He is a large man with a roundish belly, vulgar bearing, and a crafty, mistrustful eye. His oblique glances contrast strangely with the springiness of his gait and perpetual play of gesture. His beard, which is gray, short, and harsh, accentuates the opening of his mouth and white, wolflike teeth. He has the heavy jaw of a carnivorous animal.

Two men accompany Lechat. He tells his wife and daughter that they represent twenty-thousand horsepower, and then introduces them more specifically as M. Phinck and Wilhelm Gruggh, electrical engineers. He is delighted to learn that Xavier is coming home. The engineers have not heard of the young man.

Isidore. What, you haven't? But he's very well known. He's all the sporting papers talk about. He has a racing stable, a yacht, an automobile worth fifty thousand francs, friends in high society, the most beautiful actresses in Paris. He's only twenty-one to-morrow! And he has already figured in two or three very pretty scandals. He's a corker!

Mme. L. He's too many things. He gives us plenty of tangles to straighten out, principally for me, for this boy, gentlemen, is the pet craze of his father. Isidore exceeds reason. [ISIDORE *beams, rubbing his hands.*] And the rascal profits by it, God knows!

Isi. He amuses himself, the varlet. It's his age.

Mme. L. He might do it at less expense, especially as he's such a handsome boy.

Isidore regards the money he lays out on his son as an advertisement which will pay him back a hundred per cent. His wife asks him if the two guests will require beds. Of course, he says, they won't want a roost. She apologizes for the meagre dinner they will receive, but Isidore assures her that they have not come to eat but to talk business.

Isi. Enormous undertakings . . . twenty thousand horsepower. [*He shoves* PHINCK *and* GRUGGH *back and speaks to them in a low voice.*] Don't pay any attention to what my wife says. She's a good woman, but she isn't used to society . . . [*Coming back.*] Ah, big business! requiring hordes of men, millions by the handful . . . the millions of other people, eh? Gigantic works, bridges, harbors, tunnels, tramways . . . I like that sort of thing. It's my life. Do you think we can do your fellow countrymen, the Swiss, and yours, the Germans? They proclaim themselves the kings of electricity. Well, they don't know me yet. Look at this château. It was built by Louis XIV. The whole court, the whole aristocratic rout, defiled through its halls in garments of

silk and velvet! . . . Who does it belong to to-day, this royal château? To a prince? No. To a duke? No. To a man of the people . . . to a socialist.

The steward of the estate comes forward. He is a ruined viscount, a man well along in years, and Isidore takes pleasure in humiliating him and bullying him. He warns him to be on hand the next time he comes home, and after giving orders that no poor persons shall be allowed to gather dead wood on the estate, goes off to see a sick cow on which he wishes to practice his ideas of veterinary medicine. Germaine tells her mother that she has a headache and will not come to dinner, and goes off toward the house.

The engineers compliment Mme. Lechat on the magnificence of the property, but she replies with a discouraged air that she is not accustomed to living in great buildings and that the work of supervision and administration is head-splitting. It all came to them too late, she explains, shaking her head sadly. She does not feel at home here. It always seems to her as if she were travelling and staying at a hotel in a foreign country. And the great portraits of princesses in intimidating toilets! She does not know how to act with them looking at her. She wishes she were in a little house with a little servant-maid and a little garden. They remind her that the place gives her husband pleasure, but she replies that a pleasure which costs money instead of bringing it in is no pleasure.

When Isidore comes back he points out to the engineers a number of distant landmarks that lie within his estate, which comprises fourteen thousand acres. He has four hundred and nineteen fields and pastures. The next day he will show them his woods, fishponds, nurseries, sheepfolds, everything. And the adjoining estate of the Marquis de Porcellet is within his grasp. In fact, he is going to foreclose at once on the Marquis, who is an old spendthrift, he says, and heavily in his debt. Mme. Lechat groans. She does not want another château. Isidore also describes his project of raising rice, tea, coffee, and sugar cane. It is simply a matter of using the proper fertilizer, he explains. That is the theory that he is going to prove. He always succeeds in whatever he undertakes. He will grow these crops on his place, and he will be elected Deputy.

They are just starting to go in to dinner, and Mme. Lechat is explaining again that her husband never telephones when he is going to bring some one, when seven new guests arrive, ceremoniously bowing and scraping, whom Isidore had forgotten that he had invited. They are the justice of the peace and his wife, the doctor and his wife, the tax gatherer and his wife, and a retired captain. Mme. Lechat is flurried almost beyond words. Phinck and Gruggh withdraw to one side.

Gruggh. A fool. We won't have any trouble about getting what we want.

Phinck. Look out for fools like him. See his eye. He's terrible.

Gruggh. Oh, bosh!

Phinck. Look out for him. I've known some of his build, the most dangerous.

Gruggh. You're always the same, no stomach.

Phinck. And you no eyes. Look at him.

Gruggh. A man who has twice failed of election as Deputy—with money.

Phinck. A man equal to doing us.

Gruggh. Like to see him.

When the guests go toward the house with the host and hostess Garraud remains behind, and presently Germaine returns, coming from around the corner of the château. Running to him, she throws herself into his arms, and tells him that she is overcome with shame and anger and revulsion in that house where every minute is marked by an injustice or a misfortune, if not by an actual crime. She asks him to deliver her from her misery, to take her away.

The next morning when Mme. Lechat is going to mass she finds Germaine in a drawing-room that connects with Lechat's office. Germaine will not go to mass, and her mother, who has suspected that something is wrong with her, asks why she is so feverish and agitated, and so aggressive toward her parents. There are moments when Mme. Lechat wonders if her daughter is not a little crazy. As soon as Mme. Lechat has gone Germaine sends for Garraud.

The young man has been seeking another position for some time, but Germaine does not wish to remain at home any longer. She tells him they are wasting their happiness

and that the continual restraint and concealment that they practise is unworthy of them. And besides, she says, the weight of this house on her heart is more than she can bear. She wishes to let everybody know what they are to each other. He begs her to wait a little longer, for he may obtain another position any day, and then she would be safeguarded from want.

The night before after leaving him, she says, she did not sleep, but waited until dawn and then went out and walked in the woods. She walked for a long distance, and coming at last to a clearing she saw suddenly the château rising in the distance. She felt a shock as if she had seen death. It was a frightful moment, a moment of horrible enchantment. She had a vision, more oppressive than ever, real, physical, of all that the house hid within it, of all that it crushed, of all that it killed around it. Woods, fields, the park, the mass of stone on which she stood, implacable in the sunlight, represented crimes. There was not a blade of grass, not a pebble, not a scent that was not stolen. And in the earth that she walked on she heard weeping and saw blood.

He asks her where they shall go, how they shall live. The thought of want and misery is appalling to him. In passing through them, he says, one leaves behind part of one's life, part of one's pride, of one's conscience, of one's love. Before he came there he sought work vainly for three years. He knocked at every door, but none was opened to him.

Ger. You lacked faith in yourself. Now there will be two of us to struggle.

Lucien. Two to suffer doubly, and to be twice vanquished. That is what makes me timid and prudent.

Ger. And it is what makes me bold and gives me hope. You do not love . . . you do not love me . . . if your love does not give you the blind and sublime faith which triumphs over everything.

He feels that he owes her father some consideration, and asks if she is sure that she knows her father, if he is responsible for all that she accuses him of, and if it is not through herself rather than through her father that she suffers?

Luc. You suffer from entertaining a dream that is be-

yond humanity. And your ideal of absolute justice is preparing for you, oh, believe me, a future of sadness. I am not a saint either. Like everybody I am made up of good and bad . . . more of the bad perhaps than good. How do I know that on the day when you perceive that I am only a man, a poor inhabitant of the earth, you will not hate me for not being the radiant chimæra that you have created in your own mind? And then what will become of you?

Ger. That's stupid.

Luc. No, it is human. And you will find everywhere, in varying intensity and in other forms, what you have seen here at home. The scene which man inhabits may differ, but the soul is the same, or very little different. It is the poor human soul with its appetites, its interests, its destructive passions, incoherences, its crimes, yes, and with the sad fatality of its misery too. One should pity more than hate. One never knows . . . Even with the most fallen, the most hardened criminal, for those who can see it there is always a little light which shows the way for pity.

Germaine tells him the story of Gabriel Dauphin, a private banker, who appealed to her father for help when he was afraid of going under. Her father promised him help, took over his stock, and threw it on the market. The price gave way, and with it the house. Dauphin blew his brains out. Business is business. She says there are hundreds of other cases like that, thousands. In her father's eyes, she says, she has a variable, speculative value, and that he frequently plans to throw her in for good measure with a dowry as part of a bargain. In the midst of this shame and crime she might have fallen lower and lower until she had reached the point to which Xavier dropped at once, but somehow she has been preserved from the contagion, though she has been tempted often enough to humiliate her parents in her disgust and savage desire for revenge. Finally Lucien agrees to go away with her at once. She tells him to remain near the château, and directs her maid to pack some things for her in a large trunk. After some consideration she decides to take her jewelry.

Isidore brings in Phinck and Gruggh and goes for a few minutes into his private office. The two engineers hold a

final conference before coming to the grapple with the captain of industry. Both are nervous, and Phinck has lost confidence entirely. He declares that Lechat has a marvellous business sense and understanding of the times. He thinks it will not do to tell what they accomplished by false estimates, but Gruggh holds that it will impress Lechat with their ability. They agree to stand out for rake-offs on dealings with the contractors, to conceal the fact that certain difficulties are to be expected because the power is situated in a district under military control, that Phinck is to have a special commission, and that they are to receive salaries. Above all, they agree not to reveal a certain name and address.

They try to assume assured airs when Isidore returns. Isidore cuts short Gruggh's peroration, and will hear nothing about the part that electricity will play in the industrial development of Europe, or any other imposing generalities. What he wants to know is where the water power is situated. Gruggh says that is a detail. The important facts are that it is located in the mountains near a large industrial city, that there are hot springs in the neighborhood, ninety-two large hotels, and that there are large deposits of aluminum there. At first they claim that they own the water power, but Isidore is not deceived and tells them that he never embarks upon a venture without knowing what it is, where it is, and with whom he has to deal. After consulting with Phinck, Gruggh informs him that the proprietor is Joseph Bruneau, for whom they undertook to develop the power. Isidore asks if Bruneau is rich.

Gruggh. At that time he possessed three hundred thousand francs. . . . or thereabouts. We presented estimates which he accepted, and the work began. Only, he discovered that out of ten kilometers of tunnel to be dug, three had not been finished when nothing remained of his three hundred thousand francs. We had made a mistake in the estimates.

Isi. [*sarcastically*]. Ah!

Phinck. One is often mistaken in estimates.

Isi. [*leering*]. Yes! Go on.

Gruggh. Bruneau was then at our discretion. He understood it very soon. We drew up a contract under his signature by which we engaged ourselves to go on with the

work, either by providing a sum to be determined upon, or by assigning a part of the works.

Isi. That does for Bruneau . . . this poor Bruneau. And the power? This famous power?

Gruggh [*after consulting with Phinck*]. At Saint-Carex, near Grenoble.

Isi. Saint-Carex? But come, my boys, I know the place. Decidedly . . . Saint-Carex, it seems to me, is situated in the military zone.

Gruggh. Yes.

Phinck. The detail is of no importance.

Isi. Really? You think so, do you? All the vexations, all the obstacles that the military administration can throw in your way, all the delays, all the refusals, and finally, after years of struggling and false steps, time lost, money wasted, the impossibility of carrying out what you have undertaken, of exploiting whatever it may be . . . you call that a detail, my good Phinck?

Phinck [*authoritatively*]. You think that in such an enterprise . . . We are not going blindfold. We have influence in high places.

Isi. Ah! . . . And . . . capital furthermore, without doubt? Very well, then you have no need of me? Go on, my boys, go it alone. I shall like it just as well. . . . Another glass of this old Porto? . . . 1804! . . . To the health of this poor Bruneau, eh? [*He pours out glasses of wine and they drink.*] Tell me, you look as if it didn't taste so good?

Phinck. Not at all. On the contrary.

Isidore informs them that he is not to be taken in like this poor Bruneau, that he has hard bones and a tough hide and when any one tries to swallow him whole he turns crosswise and doesn't go down. He is inclined to favor their proposition, only he needs to know something definite about it, as, for instance, how much capital will be needed to start the thing going. Phinck replies that eight millions are required.

Isi. Curses! [*A pause.*] We'll have to see about that. [*A pause.*] I will undertake to find the capital, that's understood. But, permit me to stipulate most expressly that I shall do so only after making an investigation and judging the affair sound.

Gruggh. That goes without saying.

Isi. I will undertake also all the negotiations with the Minister of War. And I will be answerable for conducting them in a straightforward manner. [*He stops walking.*] And this is what I shall exact, first, that Bruneau . . . I don't know him, not I . . . Bruneau . . . and I don't want to know him. Do what you like with him.

Gruggh. Pardon me. This poor man . . .

Isi. This is either business or philanthropy. Business, isn't it? Very well. You played him for a sucker in the first place. You don't need my help to do him again. I abandon Bruneau to you. [*With a horse-laugh.*] And as for that, I warn you that the estimates that you are going to present to me will be subjected to close examination.

Isidore also stipulates that he shall have the sole financial direction of the enterprise, and all the commissions on agreements with the contractors.

Gruggh. You've said nothing about our salaries.

Isi. I won't have any.

Gruggh. But it's the fixed custom.

Isi. I won't have it on any account. We aren't employees. What the devil!

Finally Phinck says they cannot accept these conditions. Isidore replies that he will be satisfied to drop the matter. Then he adds that he thinks he will go to see Bruneau and get an interview with him which he will publish in his paper. He also thinks that he will go to see the Minister of War. A footman enters to announce the arrival of Xavier. Isidore tells the engineers to consider the matter carefully and if they accept his proposal to draw up a memorandum of their agreement with the conditions that he has mentioned. As they go toward the door he slaps them on the back, saying they are funny fellows, for he is making their fortunes and they look as if they were going to a funeral.

Xavier enters in automobile togs. He is tall and thin, and his face is already somewhat faded. He is cold in his manner and holds out a couple of fingers to his father, who insists upon giving him a kiss. Xavier states his errand very laconically. He must have two hundred thousand francs to settle a "debt of honor." His father is amazed at the amount and asks if it wouldn't be possible to com-

promise the matter. Xavier replies that it is out of the question. Finally Isidore says he shall have the money, but he must get it back again in a way that they will discuss later. Xavier inquires for a friend of his father's. Isidore replies that she is more and more an angel.

Xavier [*laughing*]. Ah, Papa, at your age!

Isi. Why not? I'm not like you. I have a young heart. The deuce! I have to have sentiment, love!

Xav. [*ironically*]. Ideals! The deuce!

Isi. Well, yes! It's a rest from business!

Isidore's study is superbly decorated with ancient tapestry and carved woodwork. A glass door gives a view of the gardens. In the centre of the room is an immense Louis XIV desk of heavy and precious workmanship. Isidore, sitting at the desk, writes a check and hands it to Xavier, warning him that his strong box will not stand many such inroads. He comes to the matter in which Xavier can help him. A friend of Xavier's, Henry Bragard, is the son of a general, who, as Isidore knows, is going to be appointed to an important position in the War Department. Now, he requires the general's assistance in an affair in which he hopes to make twenty million francs.

Xav. Bragard? You have Porcellet, his cousin-german. The two are very intimate.

Isi. I know. But I should like to have some one still closer to him. And then, I don't know yet what I shall do with Porcellet. Has your friend Henry any influence with his father?

Xav. That I don't know. But if one goes at it right one always has influence with his father.

Xavier fears that Henry will not be very glad to meet a man with a reputation like his father's, but promises to do his best to bring him to lunch with his father the next day, and asks what there is in it for him. Isidore is a little hurt at his son's coldness and cynicism, and reminds him that he has never haggled with him. Finally he dismisses Xavier with a caution against speeding in his machine.

Isidore now receives the Marquis de Porcellet, whom he has purposely kept waiting for some time. Having talked first of some inconsequential matters, the marquis states that he has been disappointed by a debtor who had pro-

mised to pay him, and that he must ask for another loan from Lechat of 200,000 francs. Isidore looks over their account and finds that the marquis owes him 1,320,000 francs already. He appears to make a mental calculation, looking the while at the ceiling, and then says that it will be impossible for him to advance any more money.

The marquis is prepared to offer further security on his estate. Isidore replies that he thinks he shall be doing well if he gets a million francs out of the marquis's place. It is the first warning of dispossession to the old marquis, and is rather a shock. Recovering himself, he offers his honor as a further guarantee, and also his prospects of an inheritance from an aunt who is eighty-three years old. Isidore is inflexible. He would gladly save the marquis from ruin, he says, but the fact is that it has long been his pet design to join the Porcellet estate to that of Vauperdu. Tapping his ledger, he adds that he can make his dream come true Monday morning.

Isidore hints, however, at a deal that they might make together which would save the marquis his estate. Then he thinks better of it, saying the marquis is too scrupulous. The poor marquis asks him to explain the plan, inquiring if it is so very terrible. In two words, Isidore says, the marquis has a son who is ruined, and he himself has a daughter who is very rich, excessively rich. His idea is to marry them. The marquis seems stunned at the proposal. He declares it is impossible. Isidore says he will cancel the marquis's indebtedness to him and will provide his daughter with an income of 250,000 francs. As the other alternative, he draws a vivid picture of ruin for the marquis to contemplate.

The first objection raised specifically by the marquis is that Isidore wishes to buy him. Isidore asserts that he will gain more than the marquis, and that therefore the marquis will be buying him, explaining this paradoxical contention by a reference to his knowledge of the appointment that will be awarded to the marquis's cousin, General Bragard. He hopes that the general will approve of a project for national defense which he has nurtured. The marquis also has some influence in the election district which Isidore could use. The marquis has to laugh at the sophistries by which Isidore solicits his support, and an

attack that he makes on his rival, the Duke de Maugis, as a vestige of the old order of things which is doomed to final extinction. This leads to a long argument over the future of the aristocracy.

It is with less firmness now that the marquis repeats from time to time that the marriage is impossible. One of the objections that he raises is the reputed manner in which Lechat has made his fortune, but Lechat argues that there is something at the basis of every fortune that will not bear investigation. By dint of whipsawing the marquis alternately with threats and promises he gradually breaks down his resistance. He offers to throw in the 200,000 francs besides everything else. At last, putting his finger on the button of an electric bell, he asks if he may send for his wife and daughter. The marquis consents, and sits down heavily in the chair from which he had risen upon the first mention of the marriage.

Mme. Lechat looks anxiously at her husband and the marquis as she comes in. Germaine enters immediately afterward. She comprehends at a glance that something unusual is going on. Isidore resumes his seat at the desk with an expression of evil triumph on his face. He asks the marquis to proceed. Making an effort, the marquis speaks in a thick voice, addressing Mme. Lechat, and saying that he has the honor to ask, in behalf of his son, Robert, the Count de Porcellet, the hand of her daughter, Mlle. Germaine Lechat. Mme. Lechat is so thunderstruck that she can hardly speak. She puts both hands to her head, looking from her husband to the marquis and then at her daughter, stammering that she does not understand.

Ger. [*rises*]. It is too great an honor, Monsieur. I do not know to what circumstance it is due, but I refuse.

Marquis [*rises*]. You refuse, Mademoiselle?

Ger. Yes, Monsieur.

Isi. You refuse?

Ger. Yes.

Isi. [*everything vile and vulgar in his being is reflected in successive expressions on his face*]. Come, come, it isn't possible! The marquis asks you in marriage for his son . . . in marriage . . .

Ger. I refuse. [*To the* MARQUIS.] And I regret that

my father did not think of consulting me before this interview. It would have spared all a painful and humiliating scene.

Isi. [*with a base expression and humiliated intonations*]. But no . . . but no . . . Monsieur le Marquis, my daughter has not understood, hasn't comprehended . . . Her astonishment doubtless . . . her joy, pride . . . She accepts.

Ger. [*more sharply*]. I refuse. Why do you oblige me to keep repeating the same thing?

Isi. Come now, that's going a little too strong!

Mar. [*bitter and vexed*]. No doubt you find the house of Porcellet unworthy of you, mademoiselle?

Ger. You are mistaken, sir.

Isi. By gad, what did I tell you?

Ger. [*sadly*]. The daughter of Monsieur Isidore Lechat has not the right to find it unworthy, whatever it may be. No . . . I refuse . . . because I am not free.

Isi. Not free. What's that song? Your mother and I consent.

Ger. I am not free!

Isi. Why?

Ger. I cannot tell you here.

Isi. [*menacingly*]. Why? Why?

Ger. You insist?

Isi. Yes.

Ger. I am not free . . . because I have a lover!

The announcement causes general stupefaction.

Isi. What? What? What's that you say? No, no, Monsieur le Marquis. [*Laughing through his teeth.*] You see plainly she's joking, amusing herself. She doesn't understand what she's saying. A lover! My daughter! . . . Ah! . . . Ah! Ah! . . . That's a good one! [*He advances menacingly toward his daughter.*] Dare to repeat that . . . dare to . . . before your father!

Ger. I have a lover! A lover! A lover! How many times must I shout it?

Isi. You lie . . . She lies . . . I tell you that she lies. Why, Monsieur le Marquis, she knows nobody. She is lying. [*Changing his tone brusquely.*] Come, my little Germaine, that's enough now, isn't it?

W. H. CRANE AS ISIDORE LECHAT

Ini. What was he doing here?
Ger. [With hauteur.] You shall see!

You wanted to play a little farce, a good farce. Nobody believes you. Come, say that it isn't true.

Ger. And this lover . . . I chose him . . . and I love him . . . and he is mine . . . mine . . . He forms no part of a bargain . . . He isn't thrown in to boot . . . he's mine . . . wholly . . . he's mine . . . freely. [*To the* MARQUIS.] This surprises you, sir, and I see it isn't the custom for one bearing the name of Lechat to be a creature that cannot be bought . . . who does not sell herself, but gives herself.

Isi. [*to his wife*]. You stand there as if you were dumb. Make her shut up.

Mme. L. [*overwhelmed*]. What do you want me to say? My God!

Isi. Then this is true?

Mme. L. I know nothing about it . . . [*suddenly.*] My God! My God! . . . My God! . . . [*Weeping.*] It was bound to happen.

Isi. What? What was bound to happen?

Mme. L. [*through her tears*]. I don't know! I don't know!

Isi. [*walking about, jostling the furniture*]. My daughter's crazy! My wife is crazy! They're both crazy! [*The* MARQUIS *prepares to go.*] Monsieur le Marquis . . . this is impossible! Impossible! There's some misunderstanding about it. I tell you that there's some misunderstanding about it.

Mar. I have nothing further to do but withdraw.

Isi. You're right. That's best. I will speak to her. [*Accompanying him.*] Ah! Monsieur le Marquis, one works for one's children, one amasses millions so that they may be happy, one has fine dreams, and then . . . But I'll fix it all up with my family. I've seen plenty of other muddles—[*lower*]—and if it's necessary to make some little additional sacrifice . . . You understand? Until to-morrow, Monsieur le Marquis.

Mar. [*very coldly, affecting very haughty dignity*]. It seems to me, sir, that we have nothing further to say to each other.

Isi. [*looking at him fixedly, and opening the door*]. It seems so to you?

Mar. Yes.

Isi. Ah!

Mar. Good-bye, sir. [*As he is going out* ISIDORE *restrains him.*]

Isi. Tell me, does the plan no longer strike you as a good one?

Mar. Let us leave it at that, sir.

Isi. So . . . it's all over between us two? [*The* MARQUIS *is silent.*] You think so? [*Same silence.*] Very well . . . official documents . . . to-morrow.

Mar. As you like! [*He goes out.*]

Isi. [*shaking his fist after the* MARQUIS]. Scum!

Isidore comes back and plants himself in front of Germaine, who regards him with a provocative air. In a fury, he grasps her by the hair and tries to force her down on her knees, but she resists and extricates herself. Informing him of her intention to leave the house, which this fatal incident has not hastened, she says there is no reason why he should regard her as his daughter, never having exchanged ten words with her. She wishes to have nothing to do with him or his money, she tells him, for as soon as she was old enough to understand anything and learned the source of his luxury she repudiated it. She has refused to wear the fine clothes he has bought her because they burned her.

Ger. Because everything, everything here, is plunder and tears. Thief! Thief!

Mme. L. [*with a cry*]. Be still! Be still! Oh, unhappy child!

Isi. Let her alone. She's much too stupid to understand me. [*Shrugs his shoulders, his fists clenched*]. My word, it is she who has offended . . . and she insults us? [*Going to* GERMAINE.] You're as brazen as you are bad. How do you dare to speak, you miserable thing?

She repeats that she has nothing to reproach herself for, holding it preferable to give herself rather than let herself be sold. He declares he will punish her, and demands to know who her lover is. Going to the window that opens on the terrrace, she calls Lucien, who comes running to her. In his surprise Isidore is for a moment bereft of speech. Then he flings himself upon Lucien with a cry of "Brigand! Brigand!" Lucien thrusts him back,

facing him calmly, and warns him against violence. In a hoarse voice Isidore accuses the young man of having designs on his money, the Lechat millions. He cannot believe that he has not, and assures them that he will disinherit Germaine, and that they may expect trouble from the police. Then he tries to buy Lucien off, and failing in this he tells them to go to the devil and starve where they like. That, he says, will be his revenge. He goes out finally, storming and inarticulate.

Mme. Lechat begs Germaine piteously not to leave her, saying she cannot live alone in that great house, that it will be like death, but Germaine although softening, replies that she must go at once and does not wish to have her father find her there when he returns. She promises to send her mother her address so that her mother may come to see her upon returning to Paris for the winter. Mme Lechat says they have not loved her enough, and that the money has caused all the trouble. Isidore comes back after Germaine has gone. His hands are thrust deep in his trousers pockets, and he looks about sideways with an evil expression. When his wife begins to bewail Germaine's departure he tells her she can go, too. She has left him by himself when the steward enters, looking distracted and haggard.

Steward. Monsieur! Monsieur!

Isi. [*without stirring, in a far-away voice*]. Who is there?

Stew. [*who can hardly speak*]. A misfortune . . . A terrible misfortune . . .

Isi. [*still without budging*]. I forbid you to speak of it. It's none of your business.

Stew. Your son . . .

Isi. My daughter . . . fool.

Stew. It isn't about your daughter . . .

Isi. She has gone. Well, yes.

Stew. No, sir. Oh, no, sir!

Isi. You're crazy, then? Are you crazy?

Stew. Don't you understand, sir? Your son [*with an effort.*] Monsieur Xavier . . .

Isi. Well?

Stew. Has been killed!

Isi. [*he has not stirred, his head concealed by his hands. After a very long time, putting his hands down, he looks at*

the steward as if in astonishment at finding him there]. What are you saying?

Stew. Monsieur Xavier has been killed.

Isi. [*rises at a bound, and at a bound he seizes the steward by the throat, strangling him*]. What did you say, idiot? [*Shakes him. The steward struggles.*] Imbecile, dare to repeat what you just said.

Stew. [*in a hoarse, faint voice*]. Let me go, sir. Let me go.

Isi. [*releasing him*]. Come, speak.

As the steward speaks Isidore's eyes grow large with horror and his face becomes distorted.

Stew. [*chopping off his words*]. In going . . . to Marécourt . . . at the turn in the road . . . M. Xavier's automobile . . . going at full speed . . . turned upside down . . . M. Xavier . . . was thrown out . . . against the wall of the Café Gadaud . . . with such violence . . . that he was crushed . . . he was killed . . . stone-dead!

Isi. [*trembling, haggard, his mouth almost paralyzed, with apoplectic grimaces*]. Wh . . . what's . . . that . . . [*his mouth remains open without a sound issuing.*]

Stew. The duke's son . . . saw the accident . . . and he came on horseback . . . to bring the frightful news.

Isi. It's . . . it's . . . [*His lips form words which are not heard.*]

Stew. They are bringing M. Xavier's body . . . It will be here . . . in ten minutes.

Isidore can no longer speak. He unties his cravat, rips out his collar button and exposes his chest. His mouth is wide open as he gasps for breath, his collar standing up like white horns on each side of his face. He staggers, and the steward supports him, guiding him to an armchair into which he slumps heavily. And suddenly he weeps, his body shaken by sobs.

Stew. Monsieur . . . Monsieur . . .

Isi. [*after a few seconds, in a trembling voice which is scarcely audible*]. I've lost all . . . in a day . . . I've lost all . . . [*He pants.*] And . . . Madame . . . ?

Stew. I haven't dared.

Isi. Yes . . . yes! . . . [*A pause.*] In a day! . . . [*Another pause.*] Air . . . give me air . . . I'm smothered . . .

The steward opens a window and then helps Isidore drag himself to it. Isidore inhales the air in great gulps.

Stew. How are you, sir?

Isi. Yes . . . that . . . is better . . . [*A pause. He breathes in the air.*] Now . . . I'm all solid . . . I want to go out . . .

Stew. You aren't in a condition, sir.

Isi. Yes . . . yes . . . it has passed . . . I must go out . . . [*He takes a few steps. The steward wishes to hold him up.*] No . . . let go . . . I'm strong.

He walks with stumbling steps. The door opens and Phinck and Gruggh come in. The steward urges Lechat to sit down, and draws an armchair up to him. Phinck and Gruggh, with every appearance of consternation, come and place themselves at each side of the chair.

Gruggh. Oh, what a misfortune!

Phinck. We have come to express our sympathy, our deepest sympathy.

Isi. Ah! my friends, my dear friends.

Phinck. Your associates.

Isi. My dear associates . . .

Gruggh. So young!

Phinck. Such a future!

Gruggh. It's frightful.

Isi. I have lost . . . all . . . in a day . . .

Phinck. We wish we could give you some consolation . . . Alas, in the face of such a misfortune . . . there is nothing . . .

Isi. In a day!

Gruggh. Time alone . . . and still . . .

Phinck. Such a handsome young man! [ISIDORE *jerks his head.*] And . . . here but now . . . so full of life . . . so gay . . . so charming!

Isi. But my dear friends . . .

Gruggh. You loved him so much! Ah, you did not deserve this . . .

Isi. [*extending his hands to* GRUGGH *and* PHINCK]. My dear friends!

Gruggh. Courage! You mustn't allow yourself to be overcome.

Isi. Ah! . . . Now! . . .

Gruggh and Phinck appear to have exhausted their words. They exchange embarrassed glances and make signs to each other.

Phinck. Would you be good enough to excuse us . . . if we were obliged to trouble you . . . for an instant . . . in your grief . . .

Gruggh. Certainly, we know how painful . . . any business would be at such a moment. [*He draws two folded sheets of paper from his pocket.*] And if we were not obliged to go to-day . . . believe me . . .

Isidore looks at them insistently. Gruggh hands him the papers.

Phinck. The signed agreement that you asked us to draft. [ISIDORE *is silent.*] You will remember?

Isi. No . . . no . . . not to-day. . . . Leave me in peace . . . [*He does not take his eyes off them.*]

Gruggh. We take the liberty of insisting.

Isi. No . . . no . . . leave me in peace . . .

Phinck. This is what . . . [*Offers the paper again.*]

Isi. [*after a pause, with a terrible face*]. Very well. Give them to me.

Gruggh. We conformed exactly to your desires.

Phinck. Exactly.

Isi. [*his hand trembling as he reads. From time to time he puts a hand to his throat. After reading the sheets he regards his associates with a terrible look. From now on his voice remains thick and shaky.*] You are scoundrels.

Phinck. What?

Isi. Thieves!

Gruggh. But . . .

Isi. You have discounted my weakness, speculated on my grief.

He rises and goes to his desk with an ill-assured step.

Gruggh. I do not understand.

Isi. Come here.

Phinck. Have we left out anything?

Isi. Come here! [*He places paper before each of them, gives each a pen.*] A modification. [*Indicating with his*

finger.] Write! [*They hesitate. He goes on in a thick voice.*] Write! [*Dictating.*] "M. Isidore Lechat, it is understood, reserves expressly to himself the financial direction and commercial administration of the said affair . . . the said affair . . . and that . . . without . . . M. Gruggh and M. Phinck . . . who declare . . . that they voluntarily abandon . . . all rights . . . in this connection . . . [GRUGGH *and* PHINCK *raise their heads and stop writing.*] Write! [*Going on dictating.*] Abandon all rights in this connection . . . that can arise in any manner whatsoever . . . and without their having the power . . . to oppose . . . any arrangement . . .

[*A servant enters brusquely.*]

Servant [*scared*]. Monsieur . . . They are bringing Monsieur Xavier's body . . . Madame has fainted . . . at full length . . . in the great salon . . .

Steo. [*supplicatingly*]. Monsieur!

Isi. [*his voice still strange, clutching the desk with both hands to keep from falling*]. I'm coming . . . I'm coming . . . [*The servant and the steward go out. He proceeds with the dictation.*] " . . . any arrangement hereafter which may be judged useful by M. Isidore Lechat alone, for the good of the enterprise." That's all, a paragraph. Here, sign! [*They sign.*] Give it to me.

He seizes both of the papers, reads them over, signs them also, and returns one copy to Phinck in silence. Then he folds his copy and puts it in his pocket. Without saluting, his legs buckling, he directs himself toward the door, catching hold of the furniture. The two engineers, amazed, in consternation, crushed, follow him with a look, not finding a word or a gesture. They wait, fixed as it were in an attitude of dismay. Isidore goes out without looking around. The two engineers remain alone on the scene, still motionless and mute, their eyes fixed, their mouths open, unable to withdraw their eyes from the door through which Isidore disappeared.

THE THIEF*

By Henry Bernstein

First played in Paris at the Théâtre de la Renaissance on December 7, 1906.

Argument: Fernand Lagardes, accused by a detective of having stolen 20,000 francs from his stepmother, confesses the theft without showing any repentance. Mme. Voysin, a guest in the house, is forced to confess to her husband that she is the thief, and that the boy desired to shield her, thereby arousing her husband's suspicions as to her relations with Fernand. Will she exonerate Fernand and regain her husband's love?

Even the presence of a comparative stranger, the austere Monsieur Zambault, does not deter Madame Voysin from heaping demonstrations of affection upon her husband. Raymond and Isabelle, their host and hostess, do not count. They are old friends. It is after dinner in the drawing-room of Raymond Lagardes' fine country house, and the men go presently to finish a game of billiards. Madame Voysin takes Madame Lagardes' hands and insists upon knowing all about this mysterious Monsieur Zambault.

Isabelle. My dear, I don't know any more about him than you do.

Marie-Louise. Haven't you asked Raymond about him?

Isa. Yes, but he always says the same thing: "I used to have frequent business relations with Monsieur Zambault, but I lost sight of him for quite a while. He turned up, though, recently, with an interesting proposition, and I am looking into it at my leisure."

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Marie-L. Your husband has not said a word to mine about this scheme, and despite his horror of strangers he invites this Monsieur Zambault to the château and forces him upon us from morning till night. Doesn't that seem strange to you, Beauty?

Isa. No. If I were curious it might, but I'm not the least bit. Oh! I'm not boasting about it, I only envy you!

Marie-L. If Richard hid the least thing from me, I should beat him!

Isa. Very well, Marie-Louise, I promise you to give Raymond a good thrashing this very evening.

Isabelle follows the men, but Marie-Louise remains, saying she will look over the paper. Fernand Lagardes, Raymond's son, who is nineteen, has been reading Maupassant in the conservatory, and now takes advantage of the opportunity for a tête-à-tête with Marie-Louise. He tells her that he has left a note for her in an armchair in her room. She has had enough of his notes, and is tired of scolding him about his attentions. He declares that he is very unhappy, and feels as if he were abandoned and alone in the world. He has sought distraction in the society of other women but found it useless. He can love no one but her, and is in utter despair.

Marie-L. [*in a very decided tone*]. Fernand! Fernand! I've had quite enough of this! I mean it! If you keep on this way I will really laugh at you. Now listen, I'm going to talk to you as if you were a man, and you are going to act like a man, a loyal and courageous one, I know. First of all, Fernand, I owe you an apology. Yes, I know I flirted with you, I admit it. But I'd no idea you were so in earnest. I'm not a vain woman and I simply didn't believe you. But all my little coquetries meant nothing, absolutely nothing! I never really gave you a serious thought. I've never given any man a serious thought. I've never even dreamed of letting any man kiss me, except my husband! It would be utterly impossible! Fernand, I'm mad about Richard! So I have to tell you right out, and be unkind, cruel! I'm even more mad about him than I seem to be. Fernand! Fernand! don't weep over it! My dear boy, please don't!

Fernand [*recovering himself*]. I'm not weeping! I really

am not! Only—I must answer you—— I have to explain——

Marie-L. Explain? Well?

Fer. [*breaking down*]. Yes, but not now.

Marie-L. Pull yourself together! Why, in a few months you'll wonder how you ever even——

Fer. Promise me one thing, will you? Since you have ordered me to do it, I'm going immediately to get the letters that are hidden in the pavilion and tear them up. You see, I obey you! Then I shall sit on the bench by the little lake and wait for you. Will you come?

Marie-L. No, not this evening, Fernand.

Fer. You won't refuse to listen to me——

Marie-L. Yes, I do refuse. Be reasonable, Fernand.

Fer. But I must see you if only for five minutes. What's the harm? Won't you come? A last talk together?

Marie-L. No, I won't. That question is not to be opened again. What would be the use?

Fer. I implore you, Marise. I hear them laughing, they've finished the game. I'm going now, and I shall sit by the little lake and wait for you.

Marie-L. You will wait in vain.

A little later Raymond gathers his wife, Marie-Louise, and Richard in the drawing-room and informs them that he has something very grave to tell them. The business he had with Monsieur Zambault, the proposition he was looking into, was all make-believe. The fact is he found that money was being stolen from his wife's secretary, in a drawer of which she has been accustomed to place gold and notes in considerable quantities without bothering to count the amount.

They calculated the total loss in three months at 20,000 francs. Monsieur Zambault is really Monsieur Gondoin, a retired police magistrate who has had very great success as a detective. In six days Gondoin has finished his inquiry and is now ready to expose the culprit. The suspense is trying. Both ladies express the fear that a favorite servant will be accused. Gondoin enters the room.

Raymond. Monsieur Gondoin, you are a rare joker, but we are all consumed with impatience, and——

Gondoin. Monsieur, I do not understand.

Richard. The name! Who is it?

[GONDOIN *makes a gesture.*]

Ray. Come! Come! Monsieur Gondoin, I have kept my part of our agreement. I said nothing until the end of your inquiry. You have just told me that it is finished, and as I owe a certain reparation to my friends for not treating them frankly in the matter, I want them to be the first——

Isa. Yes, Monsieur Gondoin, do be nice!

Gon. Monsieur, I have the honor to ask you for a private interview. In my own opinion, it ought to be private——

Isa. You're not going to leave us out!

Ray. Now really, my dear sir——

Rich. [*to* RAYMOND]. Monsieur Gondoin may have his reasons for preferring to——

Gon. Exactly.

Ray. But what reasons?

Gon. Monsieur, spare me five minutes, and——

Ray. [*shortly*]. No. We are all friends here. I can guarantee the discretion of everybody and I'm sure——

Gon. I never doubted that discretion for an instant.

Ray. Well, then? [*A pause.*] The robber can hardly get away from you now, can he? And the fact of pronouncing his name before my guests won't——

Rich. [*laughing*]. Unless you accuse one of us!

Gon. [*offended*]. Monsieur—— [*He stops. A pause.*]

Ray. [*with decision*]. Come, Monsieur Gondoin, I'm getting tired of this. I insist on your speaking!

Gon. Very well! I am acting in this affair entirely in your interests. Since you take no account of my obvious opposition——

Ray. [*dryly*]. No account.

Gon. I bow to your wishes. Only it is not enough that you merely insist. You demand——

Ray. I do.

Gon. You demand that I disclose publicly all that my investigation has brought to light?

Ray. Yes.

Gon. Very well, Monsieur. The person who took the twenty thousand francs out of the secretary drawer is Monsieur Fernand Lagardes, your son.

Ray. [*starting up, about to spring upon* GONDOIN]. You lie!

A moment of confusion follows. Richard and Isabelle hold back Raymond. When Raymond has grown calmer and apologized for his outburst Gondoin asks if a change has not come over Fernand of late. They have noticed that he has become shy and taciturn. The ex-magistrate then inquires how much spending money the boy has, and informs them that he has been carrying on an affair with a woman of the demi-monde. The boy also frequents the race track and bets large sums, according to Gondoin.

That very afternoon Gondoin set a trap for the thief. He placed two thousand francs, which he obtained from Monsieur Lagardes, in the secretary in the boudoir, having marked the notes. They were still there before dinner. After dinner he saw Fernand slip upstairs. Upon looking in the secretary again, Monsieur Gondoin found that four hundred and fifty francs had been stolen. The only other person who had been upstairs was Madame Voysin, and she went to put on a scarf, as Gondoin perceived when she came down.

Richard says they must tell Fernand at once of what he is accused. Raymond cannot believe the boy guilty and is reluctant to speak to him about the matter. Marie-Louise thereupon suggests that she shall tell him that she thinks his father is trying to hide some terrible grief, and ask him if he has anything to reproach himself for. She goes out quickly and her voice is heard calling Fernand in the park. After a few minutes she returns and says that she could not find him. He enters from the hall, having come down the stairs.

Gon. Monsieur Fernand, you find solemn faces and sad hearts. Your family and your friends are shocked beyond expression.

Fer. At what?

Gon. Let me first tell you the real reason for my being here at all. I was sent by the Attorney-General of the Republic.

Fer. By the Attorney-General?

Gon. Yes. There has been a robbery in the château.

Fer. Here?

Gon. Here. The thief got away with quite a large amount.

Fer. [*in a surprised tone*]. Ah!

Gon. I thought you might be able to help us. I have begun to suspect the butler.

Fer. Louis?

Gon. Louis! Old Louis. I understand your feelings. The man has been in your family for thirty years.

Fer. But Louis would not steal!

Gon. You think him incapable of dishonesty?

Fer. Absolutely incapable.

Gon. [*looking fixedly at* FERNAND]. And you would be willing to swear to that before a court?

Fer. I should.

Gon. Then tell me who is the thief.

Fer. I don't know! Why should you imagine——

Gon. You don't know who the thief is?

Fer. The thief?

Gon. Yes. You know who he is!

Fer. Are you joking?

Gon. Do you know Mademoiselle Jessie Arnold?

Fer. [*leaping up*]. Now see here, you! I forbid you——

Gon. Don't get excited! Just tell us what you were doing upstairs there this evening, about quarter after nine.

Fer. [*worried*]. Upstairs?

Gon. In the story where Madame Lagardes's rooms are.

Fer. [*lowering his voice*]. I was not up there.

Gon. You were seen going up there at a quarter after nine!

Fer. [*same business*]. It is a mistake. I was not up there!

Gon. Besides that, you've been up there pretty frequently.

Fer. [*very much worried*]. I have not! You are mistaken!

Gon. You have never been in Madame Lagardes's boudoir?

Fer. Never!

Gon. What? Look at me!

Fer. [*hesitating*]. I do not remember. No, never!

Gon. Look at me! You are the thief!

Fer. [*feebly*]. I? You are mistaken, Monsieur, I have never stolen anything.

Gon. It was you who took Madame Lagardes's money out of the secretary drawer!

Fer. I repeat——

Gon. It is useless to deny it! You don't dare even to raise your eyes.

Fer. [*looking* GONDOIN *straight in the face, but speaking without conviction*]. It is false! I did not steal the money.

Ray. Fernand! Fernand! Can't you see that the very tone of your voice convicts you?

Gon. Come on, my boy, own up!

Fer. No! I did not take the money!

Ray. Show some indignation at least! Yell, if necessary!

Gon. He will be sensible about it! He knows I've got him, that I saw him! Yes, I saw you! Own up, won't you, and don't prolong this situation that is so terrible for everybody. [*A pause.*]

Ray. Well?

Fer. I should like to speak to you, father, by yourself.

Ray. It is useless. Your shame is now public. [*He sits down, overcome.*]

Gon. You admit it?

[FERNAND *makes an affirmative sign.*]

How did you know that Madame Lagardes kept her money in that drawer?

Fer. [*after some hesitation*]. Why, I—I knew it.

Gon. How did you get the drawer open?

Fer. I tried several keys, but none of them worked. Then I slipped the blade of my penknife into the groove and pushed down the lock.

Gon. Exactly. [*Turning to the others with a professional smile.*] I told you that nearly all the drawers in the house could be opened that way! And to shut it?

Fer. I used a key—the key of the wardrobe. It wouldn't open the lock, but it would shut it.

Gon. How much did you take altogether?

Fer. Twenty-one thousand five hundred francs.

Gon. Where did you hide the four hundred and fifty francs you got just now?

Fer. I didn't hide them. Here they are!

Gon. [*examining the notes*]. Yes, these are the ones. Here are the marks. [*To* RAYMOND.] Monsieur——

Ray. [*to* FERNAND]. Go to your room and wait for me! I'll come and talk to you directly!

Fer. Very well, father! [*Exit.*

Rich. [*to* RAYMOND]. Poor old man! Poor old fellow!

Ray. My dear friends, do you mind leaving me? I can't talk any more!. I want to be alone with my wife! It is a cruel blow, and I must be alone to think things out.

When Richard and Marie-Louise are in their room he expresses surprise at her calmness. It strikes him as extraordinary that women can live in an atmosphere of catastrophe as if it were their natural element. Fernand's confession fell on Raymond like a blow with an axe. Marie-Louise replies that he will get over it, and that in three months' time Fernand's series of crimes will be looked back upon as mere youthful folly.

Marie-Louise takes a card-case from the bosom of her gown, hides it among some linen in a chest of drawers and locks the drawer. It is, has always been, somewhat of a mystery how she manages to dress handsomely on her slender means, and as he compliments her on the gown she is wearing she explains that she makes sketches of models at Paquin's and has her seamstress copy them. The materials she obtains exclusively at bargain sales. He is more concerned about Fernand's trouble, however, and remarks that it seems very odd to him that the boy made so little defence.

Marie-L. He knew he was caught. And then Monsieur Gondoin questioned him so cleverly——

Rich. Didn't he! He made cold chills go up and down my back. Fernand is a queer chap! Is he indifferent or just cynical? The way he handed out those banknotes! Everything about it, his replies sometimes vague and sometimes precise, too precise! All that wealth of detail about breaking open the drawer, most of it false——

Marie-L. False?

Rich. Yes. You can't pick a lock with a penknife.

Marie-L. I don't see why not.

Rich. What do you know about it?

Marie-L. Don't you remember what Monsieur Gondoin told us when we were alone with him? He had paid a

visit this afternoon to nearly all of the drawers in the house by means of a knife.

Rich. Nonsense! Gondoin used a skeleton key. He was just bluffing. He's playing the man who has tried everything and found out everything.

Richard has taken out his penknife and gone to the chest of drawers. In reply to a sudden question from Marie-Louise as to what he is about, he says that he wishes to see if he is not right as to the lock.

Marie-L. [*she has run quickly over to him*]. Let that drawer alone!

Rich. Why?

Marie-L. [*stamping her foot*]. Let that drawer alone, I tell you!

Rich. My! What's the matter with you this evening?

Marie-L. [*taking him by the hand*]. Come on, Ricky, let's go to bed!

Rich. My dear little one, there's nothing to prevent your going into the dressing-room. [*He goes on trying to pick the lock.*] I bet I'll be in bed before you are.

Marie-L. Oh! will you?

Rich. [*sliding the penknife into the groove*]. There! I told you so! See? Why do you suppose he said that? [*He moves away from the chest of drawers.* MARIE-LOUISE, *reassured, goes over to the bed and changes the position of the pillows. Meanwhile,* RICHARD *goes back to the chest of drawers.*] Why, look! If you lift it up—why, it does! Gondoin was right, the drawer is open!

Marie-L. [*who has run over to him. She slams shut the drawer which* RICHARD *has opened slightly*]. Well, are you satisfied now?

He opens the drawer halfway and exclaims at the store of beautiful linen. At a word regarding the card-case she commands him with sudden violence not to touch it. This tempts him and he holds it up at arm's length. She declares that if he does not give it to her instantly she will never speak to him again as long as he lives. Pretending to believe that it contains the photograph of a lover, he opens and sees his own picture.

Marie-L. Now, will you please——

Rich. [*offering his cheek*]. Kiss first——

Marie-L. No, give it back first.

Rich. Take it! [*He holds it out to her and then draws it back suddenly.*] How thick it is! What else have you got in it?

Marie-L. Nothing.

Rich. Excuse me! [*Still joking.*] Letters beyond a doubt, incriminating letters!

[*They struggle again.*]

Marie-L. You're not funny, a bit!

Rich. [*feeling the card-case behind his back*]. It feels like parchment.

Marie-L. They are some business papers.

Rich. Business papers!

Marie-L. No! Money! Now, are you satisfied?

Rich. Money!

Marie-L. What I've saved by my economies! Oh! la! la!

Rich. Fancy this little chicken making economies! Why, yes—six hundred francs. [*Looking at the notes which he has taken from the card-case.*] What! Six hundred francs! You have been economical to the extent of six hundred francs?

Marie-L. [*motionless, in a dry tone*]. It looks like it!

Rich. [*surprised*]. It's not possible! You have found a way of putting aside——

Marie-L. It seems so!

Rich. But—but only this morning you asked me—you told me you were running short!

Marie-L. [*upset*]. I assure you all this conversation is very unpleasant for me. You could very well spare me.

Rich. This conversation——

Marie-L. [*crescendo*]. You've no complaint to make of the way I run the house? Do I do it foolishly? No? Well, then, don't mix yourself up in my accounts, and let my little budget alone, I beg you.

Rich. Oh! Very well.

Marie-L. [*on the point of tears*]. You see how nervous I am, and any one would think you were amusing yourself by——

He gives her the card-case, saying he thought she could take a joke, and tells her to calm herself and put away her money. When she has replaced the card-case in the drawer

she goes to the dressing-room. He calls her back almost immediately.

Rich. Marise, since our marriage there has never even a shadow passed over our love. Until now no concealment, nothing ugly. At least I have liked to think so.

Marie-L. [*laughing*]. And now do you doubt it?

Rich. [*taking her hand*]. My wife, my dear wife, I want you to tell me right away how that money came into your possession.

Marie-L. Now you're beginning again!

Rich. I'm not beginning again, I'm just beginning. And I'm in a hurry to finish. Answer me.

Marie-L. [*candidly*]. Why, my poor wolf, I economize the way every one else does. I pinch and scrape and bargain——

Rich. No.

Marie-L. I declare——

Rich. No! No! No!

Marie-L. Well, Richard——

Rich. No! Your ingenuity, your *savoir faire*, your common sense has surprised all of us. Without going beyond our income, which is relatively modest, you manage the clever trick of dressing as elegantly as the richest women.

Marie-L. Really?

Rich. Exactly that. Every day you receive compliments. Well, I admit that this luxury has not represented a very large outlay——

Marie-L. Thanks.

Rich. But I cannot quite see all your elegance and a saving of six hundred francs in less than a year. Your clever management would become a miracle, and I don't believe in miracles. Please explain.

If he must know everything, she says, the money does not entirely represent economies. She has put aside some bills and kept the money she had to pay them with. Seeing that she was not telling the truth about having saved the money, he accuses her of not doing so now. He declares that she owes nothing. If he will only wait till morning, she says, she will account for everything, centime by centime. She starts to cry and tells him she will not listen to another thing.

Half an hour ago the idea would not have entered his head that their means were not sufficient for her expenses. Now he is certain of it. He demands to know where she got the money, the money for her gown, the money for those things in the drawer, the money for everything. Again and again he repeats the question point blank as she turns and doubles. And why is she pale with terror?

Rich. There's no use trying to gain time. I'm not going to let you go until you tell me where you got that money!

[*A pause.* MARIE-LOUISE *turns away her face and lowers her eyes.* RICHARD, *quite close to her, almost whispers.*]

You were mixed up in that business of the twenty thousand francs, weren't you? Answer! Answer me! Every movement you make accuses you! Fernand didn't do the stealing entirely on his own account? Or did you steal, too? Answer me!

Marie-L. Fernand did not steal at all.

Rich. What?

Marie-L. [*in a whisper*]. Fernand accused himself to save me. I stole the twenty thousand francs.

Rich. Oh!

[*Instinctively he recoils. Then he sits down, crushed.* MARIE-LOUISE *drops to the floor, sobbing bitterly. A long pause.*]

Marie-L. [*brokenly*]. Richard—Richard——

Rich. [*without moving, without raising his head, in a thick voice*]. Why did you do it?

Marie-L. I wanted to have pretty things—to look pretty—to please you!

Rich. To please me?

Marie-L. It's the truth!

Rich. [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Yes!

Marie-L. It was my only reason for doing it, for doing anything—my only reason for living at all! It's the truth!

Rich. You, you! a thief! I can't grasp it at all—you of all people in the world! A thing like that degrades one, throws one down into the mud, and once there, you never get out again. [*In anguish.*] But, good God! The motive! The reason!

Marie-L. My mad love for you—threats, duns!

Rich. Threats? What next? I can't believe a word you say any more.

Marie-L. I am suffering, Richard.

Rich. I don't believe you!

Marie-L. I am not suffering because of what you are saying to me, but I suffer because I make you suffer, because I hear that hostile voice and know that it is your voice. If I could only punish myself for my error, for my fault, for my crime!

Rich. Every word you speak now rings untrue.

Marie-L. Then it's no use for me even to try to defend myself, to try to show you, to tell you——

He tells her to go on, saying she cannot make matters worse. It was her love for him that carried her away, she continues. Neither pretty nor rich, she feared that she should never find a man she could love who would marry her, and that she would grow old alone. She used to weep from melancholy, as many young girls do. Then she fell in love with him, and at last he began to love her. She could hardly believe it. Even when they were engaged it seemed like a dream.

For a whole year, ever since their marriage, a single thought had been burning in her brain, that she must keep her husband. She learned that he had been successful with women and determined that he should not regret the past. At first she tried to get along on their means, but they saw so much of women who spent a great deal on their clothes that she lost her confidence. At last she began to vie with them and was rewarded by an appreciation from him that intoxicated her with happiness. After that she would have nothing but things from the most expensive places.

Her craving for pretty things became a mania, and the debts grew terribly. Then her seamstress arranged a way in which she could get things simply by paying interest, very high interest, but afterward payments on the bills were demanded. One day, soon after they came to the château, she had just had a terrible talk over the telephone with one of the shops when she saw Isabelle throw several thousand francs carelessly into the secretary. The temptation overpowered her.

Richard gets up to go and tell Raymond at once. She begs him to give her five minutes more.

Rich. Very well. Speak quickly.

Marie-L. Richard, what do you intend to do?

Rich. Intend to do?

Marie-L. About me.

Rich. What do you mean?

Marie-L. Our life.

Rich. I'm afraid this will make a difference.

Marie-L. Then you'll let me stay with you? You won't turn me out?

Rich. What nonsense! Why, anyhow, I only consider you half responsible.

Marie-L. Very well! Now, Richard, listen, and listen carefully! This distrusting pardon that you throw at me——

Rich. You're mistaken——

Marie-L. Yes! Yes, distrusting! This distrusting pardon will be the attitude of our friends as well. Perhaps they will not go even that far!

Rich. I am counting a great deal on their goodness.

Marie-L. Don't expect them to do the impossible! For my part, their opinion doesn't matter! I shall regret nothing, not even a break!

A revelation will break up this friendship. And then he will carry regrets with him till the end of his days. She urges him to consider finding some way not to ruin their future. He replies that she is wasting her breath. She is carrying her lack of principle a little far.

Rich. You said just now that you and I were different, try and remember it! You insult me without knowing it!

Marie-L. And you outrage me without needing to! Why are you making all this parade of your superiority? I know that you are stronger, more honest, more intelligent and finer than I! If you were not my master, should I love you as I do, to idolatry? In spite of everything, I have the right to hold on to my happiness, to defend it! Richard, do, oh! do let us save our happiness!

Rich. Too late!

Marie-L. No! not yet! But it will be too late when you have denounced me! Then you will be suspicious of every glance they make, of every movement, you will

know that they know, and your love will be dipped in the mire!

She catches hold of him and drags him back from the door. She does not ask him to keep Raymond's money. He shall pay it back to the very last sou. He can easily do this, little by little, in his management of Raymond's affairs. She and Isabelle will do what they can to console Raymond, and he will be only too willing to find a reason to pardon his son. At last, when they no longer owe a sou of the money, if it will sooth his conscience, they will make a clean breast of the whole thing. He is apparently affected by her plea and is further softened by caresses, but another thought occurs to him.

Rich. Marise, why did Fernand accuse himself? Why did Fernand take the blame on himself?

Marie-L. Because I asked him to!

Rich. What! What! What! You asked him to?

Marie-L. Yes.

Rich. When? Where?

Marie-L. This evening, in the park——

Rich. This evening?

Marie-L. When I left you all—when I went to look for Fernand!

Rich. Then you did find him? But you came back and said——

Marie-L. So as not to awaken suspicion!

Rich. Then your return without him, and his entry, it was all a stratagem? You fixed it up between you?

Marie-L. Yes, Richard.

Rich. Ah! [*A pause.*] And you thought it all out then and there, this comedy?

Marie-L. I planned it while Gondoin was talking. His mistake gave me a chance of safety—yes—at the price of another crime. Fright inspired me! Have pity, Richard!

Rich. You knew you would find Fernand?

Marie-L. I saw him go toward the little lake——

Rich. In any case, you were sure he would agree? Your calm, your repose——

Marie-L. I hoped that he would do me this service.

Rich. You didn't have time to ask him to do you a service. No! You were gone only a few minutes—only long enough to give some instructions, an order.

Marie-L. An order?

Rich. [*with a threatening look*]. An order.

Marie-L. Well, Fernand agreed almost as soon as——

Rich. [*too calmly*]. Admit, Marie-Louise, that all this is very strange! I defy you to answer that simple question: how——

Marie-L. Don't ask it. It is understood that I am no longer hiding anything from you, neither my thoughts nor my deeds. I turned to Fernand because he had been making love to me.

[RICHARD *has come back to the centre of the room and* MARIE *has followed him.*]

Rich. Making love to you?

Marie-L. Just calf love, a schoolboy passion, you know——

Rich. Has it been going on a long time?

Marie-L. Rather long. Since we came to the château.

Rich. And you didn't tell me?

Marie-L. The boy didn't seem to me to be dangerous! Besides, I'm not afraid of any man, of any temptation. I love *you!*

Rich. You love me and yet for four months you have allowed——

Marie-L. I do reproach myself for some coquetry.

Rich. Good! Now we've come to the coquetry!

Marie-L. I regret it all now, but only on Fernand's account. I ought to have snubbed him before.

Rich. Oh! Then you did pull him up short?

Marie-L. This very evening!

Rich. [*more and more threateningly*]. Ah! Ah! This evening! How convenient! Not very severely, I imagine, since two hours later you demanded of him a tremendous self-sacrifice—yes, tremendous! At your request, this boy, who is pride personified, acknowledges publicly a crime he did not commit! It is heroic! It is sublime! But it is curious!

Marie-L. I misjudged him, I abused his generosity. I saw in Fernand a really deep sentiment——

Rich. Why, it's not a minute since you told me it was only a schoolboy passion!

Marie-L. Don't try to mix me up in what I say, Richard. I'm telling you the truth!

Rich. Oh! Oh! Well, let us go on along that line! If Fernand did not steal, why did he go so often to our rooms in the absence of Raymond, in the absence of Isabelle, in my absence?

Marie-L. And in my absence! He came up here to hide letters that he intended for me.

Rich. Then you've carried on a correspondence?

Marie-L. No, I've never written him a single line. If you could have read his letters, you would understand how far——

Rich. Of course none of them is in existence now.

Marie-L. No. I gave them back to Fernand to destroy them.

Rich. You gave them back to Fernand! I see! I see! You gave them back this evening, of course?

Marie-L. Exactly. This evening——

Rich. [*restraining himself with difficulty*]. You trull! Have you done making a fool of me?

Marie-L. [*trying to embrace her husband*]. Richard, my dearest, my beloved, you're joking!

Rich. [*repulsing her*]. Ah! Let me alone! You shan't get me that way another time!

Marie-L. [*violently*]. What are you thinking of?

Rich. [*bursting out*]. I'm not thinking any longer! I was eighteen once, my dear, like this Cherubino! I used to glide into bedrooms, too! And I would have sacrificed myself the same way!

Marie-L. Richard! Take care! Take care! You will say something that you will regret!

Rich. I shall regret nothing! I am glad, delighted to see you at last as you are! You didn't employ your slyness only to pick a lock and empty a money-drawer! You've been deceiving me, too!

Marie-L. [*beside herself*]. Don't you dare——!

Rich. You've been deceiving me! You are probably still doing it! Only a mistress gets rid of a toy in that way!

Marie-L. Madman! Wretch!

Rich. [*in a paroxysm*]. Drop those airs of outraged affection! They don't go any longer! You never were in love! A depraved woman, that's what you are! Senses, yes! Vices, yes! As much as one wants of them! More than one wants!

Marie-L. [*in a voice that makes* RICHARD *be silent*]. Be silent! I command you to stop! It is just your masculine vanity crying out now, and you no longer even reach me! But I won't have you degrade yourself like that! I don't want to love a cad!

Rich. Oh! when it comes to insults——

Marie-L. It's all understood! I stole! I stole! I stole! Spit in my face! Give me up to the police! Publish my shame broadcast! But I forbid you to defile our past! You shall not touch that!

Rich. And I, too, have had enough of your humbug! Good-night!

Marie-L. [*throwing herself before the door*]. What are you going to do?

Rich. Wake your young gentleman, my dear, and say a few words to him!

Marie-L. You're not going out of this room!

Rich. Am I not?

Marie-L. You're mad with jealousy, and I——

Rich. Get out of the way! [*He seizes her by the arm and whirls her around.*]

Marie-L. [*she has fallen on her knees*]. Richard! You see that window! If you go out——

Rich. You'll throw yourself out on the rocks, I suppose! I'm not such a fool as to believe that! [*He is at the door.*]

Marie-L. [*getting up from the floor and running to the window*]. You don't know me, Richard!

Rich. [*changing his mind*]. Stop! What is the point of all this?

Marie-L. You shall not disgrace yourself!

Rich. Do you expect to keep me a prisoner forever?

Marie-L. I only ask you to think things over! When morning comes act as you think best! But if you go one step out of this room——

Rich. Very well! I give in! Come away from there! [*He makes her leave the window.*] But you will gain nothing. We shall pass the night this way, face to face!

Marie-L. I didn't expect anything else!

Rich. [*raising his hand to strike her*]. You jade!

Marie-L. Go on, strike me!

Rich. [*spitefully*]. You would be only too glad! Let us wait thus for the dawn!

The following morning Marie-Louise and Richard are nervous and fatigued when they come down to the library. Isabelle soon joins them. She tells them that Raymond's interview with Fernand the night before lasted three hours. The boy showed only a vague sort of repentance, and Raymond has decided that the only thing to do is to get him away from the snares of Paris. He is going to send him to the plantation in Brazil for two years.

When Fernand is banished, Isabelle says, Raymond will go right on suffering. She regards the plan as disastrous, and counts on her friends to upset it. Raymond now comes in and tells them that Fernand will leave the house in a few minutes. Richard says that he approves of Raymond's decision. He scarcely takes his eyes off Marie-Louise, who is terrified and almost fainting. She declares to Richard, aside from the others, that she will not be present when Fernand is sent away, but he holds her by the wrist and compels her to stay.

Fernand enters. His father informs him that he is going to give him the means of earning his living and the other money as well, and since the atmosphere of Paris has not been healthful, he has decided that Fernand had better leave immediately. There is nothing for him to do but obey. Fernand, to whom exile is a terrible blow, begs for some other punishment, but his father replies that he is not trying to punish him. Fernand seems stupefied, and almost staggers as he approaches Isabelle to say good-bye. He turns to Marie-Louise who straightens up to keep from falling.

Marie-Louise and Fernand look at each other. Their lips move but no word is heard. Their hands scarcely touch, and then, slowly, Fernand goes to the door into the hall. As he reaches the door he turns, comes back, and falls on his knees before his father.

Fer. Father! Father, have pity on me!

Ray. Ah! Go! Go! I am ashamed of your humiliation! Go! Go! Go! You are on your knees, but it is I who am begging you! Go!

[FERNAND, *distracted, gets up and rushes out.*

Ray. [*in tears*]. My dear friends, this has been a terrible hour.

Rich. [*taking* RAYMOND *by the arm*]. And now, Raymond——

Isa. Marise is ill! [*Running to her.*] Marise, little Marise!

Marie-L. [*stifling*]. No! No! I'm all right! It is nothing! Let me alone! [*She pushes* ISABELLE *away from her and cries out.*] Raymond, run and stop the automobile! It was I who took the money! It was I! It was I! It was I!

Ray. What?

Marie-L. Yes! Yes! I did it! But run! Run quickly! Raymond, I tell you I was the thief! I! I! I!

Ray. What is she saying?

Rich. It's the truth! It was my wife who stole your twenty thousand francs.

Raymond runs out, and Richard asks Isabelle to leave him alone with his wife. She does so, and Richard, turning to Marie-Louise, says that his plan has succeeded just when he thought it was going to fail.

Marie-L. [*astounded*]. What? I don't understand!

Rich. Don't play the innocent! You spent the whole night fighting me, trying to keep me from revealing your guilt, the whole night dragging around, clinging to me, indifferent to all I had to say and to all my anguish! You begged me to keep silent, to be your accomplice! You regarded a denunciation as the worst possible thing that could happen, worse than death itself! And after all your efforts, your labors, your thrills of agony, at the first whine from your young friend, without giving me time to proclaim the truth, you yell it out and accuse yourself at the top of your lungs! [*With a bitter laugh.*] Ah! Ah! Thanks! Bravo! I give in! [*A pause.*] Oh, yes, shrug your shoulders! That's right and proper! But answer me first! Answer me if you can——

Marie-L. My poor Richard!

Rich. Oh, you needn't pity me! I wanted to see! And I saw!

Marie-L. Well, what did you see? Obviously I did not know you were trying any plan! I thought that out of jealousy or anger you—— But enough of this! I tell you that, rather than speak, I should have dropped dead where I stood. But when Fernand went away weeping, when Raymond and Isabelle stood there in tears, although you think I am a woman without a soul—you may be right

—a creature of lies and deceptions—well, I felt something, all the same! And so I cried out! I cried to save brave, good Fernand!

It was also to deliver herself that she cried out, and so that their beautiful past should live again. And they still love each other. She sees that he thought the invincible force which compelled her to burst out was her mad passion for Fernand, that she could not endure being separated from him.

Marie-L. That was what you thought, wasn't it? Very well, now I suggest to you, myself, that you and I exile ourselves together! That we embark for Rio in his place, to change our country, our very continent, and not come back until you choose! Or never come back at all! I should accept it with joy!

Is that not proof enough, she asks him. He is silent. She insists that he shall send for Fernand and question him. He must get at the truth, cost what it may, and if he is a man he will know then that he is outraging her without reason. Richard rings. Marie-Louise is surprised when he asks the servant for Monsieur Lagardes instead of for Fernand. Richard assures Raymond first and foremost that his boy is absolutely innocent.

The night before when Richard learned the truth between one and two o'clock, he continues, his first move was to go directly to Raymond's room. Marise clung to him like a drowning person and he had pity on her. For the first time in his life he wavered between doing right and doing wrong. But he did not have time to hesitate long. Almost at the same moment disagreeable suspicions crossed his mind. He was jealous of Fernand.

Raymond can hardly believe it, but Richard assures him that that was why Fernand was willing to sacrifice himself. Eaten up with jealousy, Richard never gave even a thought to Raymond's sorrow. He wanted to know. Now he asks if Raymond will forgive him. Raymond shrugs his shoulders and holds out his hand. Richard takes it in a long clasp.

Rich. Yes. [*Pointing to* MARIE-LOUISE *crouching miserably in an armchair, with her face hidden.*] And now, look! Oh! I am not being malicious! I love her better than you imagine, and she on her part loves me, too. She wanted to

deck herself out so as to be pretty for my sake, as pretty as the others. Do you understand? Certainly there is nothing worse than stealing, nothing lower! But she is in love, passionately so! When one sees a fellow of my temper, whirling, like a cloud of dust, you might say—— And then when she cried out just now, how glad I was! Ever since she spoke to me I have been thankful to her for doing it, for proclaiming Fernand's innocence before me in spite of me! And then, I was in the wrong as well. We men teach our wives only one duty: that of pleasing! When they are desirable, desired, then it is we who triumph. They know that only too well—— Instead of making a real companion of my own wife I have unconsciously encouraged her into coquetry. And so, old man, you'll have to forgive her, too; because I love her! Look at me—you know what that means? I love her——

Ray. Well, then, take her in your arms!

Rich. One minute! I put one condition to your clemency! Your verdict was that the guilty person should go to Brazil. I agree with you! If you have not lost all confidence in your old pal, I accept now the situation you offered me before my marriage. We are the ones who will embark for Pauillac.

Ray. You don't mean you will start to-morrow?

Rich. No, we will go by the next boat. It will take me a fortnight to put my affairs in order, but we shall pass those fourteen days in Paris, at a distance from you.

Ray. No! No!

Rich. My dear friend, that idea has taken root in my brain and nothing will dislodge it. The automobile is ready, I believe, and it will take us to Paris. This evening the maid can follow with our trunks.

Ray. My dear children, if it is only to avoid gossip——

Rich. Raymond, I know that in the goodness of your heart you will suggest all sorts of plans. Don't do it. We have passed through a devilishly unpleasant time, she and I, and we've got to put out to sea. I assure you——

Ray. [*resigned*]. Well, then——

Rich. However, we mustn't forget any one—— There is Fernand! We couldn't disappear without seeing him again! That would be pretty bad, wouldn't it? Will you send him in here to me?

Ray. I will—— [*Just as he is going out.*] Marise——

Marie-L. [*without raising her eyes*]. Raymond?

Ray. Little Marise, I'll wait for you with Isabelle. We shall want to wish you godspeed—to kiss you good-bye. You'll come, won't you?

Marie-L. [*gratefully*]. Yes, Raymond.

Ray. In a little while, then. [*Exit.*

Rich. [*after a pause*]. Come here!

Marie-L. [*when she is close to her husband*]. Richard——

Rich. Hush! [*He draws her to him in a long embrace.*]

Marie-L. My dear husband——

Rich. Hush! Hush! [*A silence. Then, changing his tone.*] Now, how about this young man?

Marie-L. Don't be unkind to him.

Rich. You needn't be afraid.

Marie-L. What are you going to say to him?

Rich. I shall say—a lot of things. I shall say: "You've behaved like a young imp and like a young hero." No, no—I shall say that the time of poetry is past, and we must now get down to plain prose. And I shall tell him how Isabelle stood up for him, fought for him as if she had been his own mother. I shall tell him above all——

Enter FERNAND.

Fer. Here I am, Marise.

Marie-L. Fernand, it was Richard who wanted to talk to you.

Rich. [*taking* FERNAND *by the shoulders.* FERNAND *is about to burst forth*]. Listen, you! [*A silence.* RICHARD *releases* FERNAND *and says simply.*] No. [*Then to* MARIE-LOUISE.] Say good-bye to him! [*Exit* RICHARD.

Fer. Then you are going away?

Marie-L. You have been very good, Fernand.

Fer. You are going away?

Marie-L. Yes, but I shall never forget what you did. I shall remember it wherever I go.

Fer. You are going away for a long time?

Marie-L. We are going into exile instead of you. We must. I shall go out of this house with a bowed head.

Fer. And the prospect of a second wedding journey doesn't seem unpleasant to you? Well—that is only logical. It's all right, I suppose. Good-bye. I hope you will enjoy yourself!

Marie-L. Don't be unjust to me! You mustn't be angry! I'm so afraid, Fernand.

Fer. Afraid?

Marie-L. Afraid for you.

Fer. For me?

Marie-L. Afraid to leave you—afraid that——

Fer. Ah! You're afraid I might kill myself and cast a gloom over your honeymoon?

Marie-L. I'm afraid of your despair. Don't avenge yourself on life by doing anything foolish!

Fer. Don't worry! In the first place, I am very stubborn! I shall hope in spite of everything, and wait for your return.

Marie-L. Your words are lying, but the tone of your voice speaks the truth! My little knight, I entreat you! Show yourself generous and fine to the very end. Swear to me——

Fer. You have my word that——

Marie-L. Swear on my head!

Fer. What for? If I——

Marie-L. Swear it on my head!

[*A pause.*]

Fer. [*breaking into sobs*]. Marise, you are going! You are going away! I shall lose you! It is torture! Marise, it hurts so! [*He throws himself into a chair.*]

Marie-L. It won't be very long before you will look back on this suffering with surprise, with the eyes of a stranger. Fernand, dear, you who are weeping now will laugh at it! Yes, you will laugh to think that you ever had any idea of dying for a miserable little creature like me—for Marise!

Fer. [*stifling with tears*]. You are going away! Going away! It is terrible!

Marie-L. The time is getting on! Please——

Fer. Don't be afraid! I swear——

Marie-L. On my head?

Fer. On your head. [*Hiding his head in his arms on the table, he sobs convulsively.*]

Marie-L. [*leaning over him*]. Fernand, my dear, dear boy! [*She leans farther over him, kisses him, and goes out.*]

THE MASTERPIECES OF MODERN DRAMA

PART II

The Masterpieces of Modern Drama

GIOCONDA*

By Gabriele D'Annunzio

Translated by Arthur Symons

First played in Milan at the Ponchinelli Theatre on April 8, 1876.

Argument: Lucio Settala, a Florentine sculptor, having sought liberty in death under the stress of an overwhelming passion for Gioconda Dianti, has been saved by the devoted care bestowed upon him by his wife. His heart is filled with love for his wife, but the other woman re-exerts her fascination. It still remains for Lucio to solve his problem.

Silvia Settala and the old man Lorenzo Gaddi enter the large square parlor of Lucio Settala's house in Florence. Two windows open on a garden; through one of them can be seen, rising against the placid fields of the sky, the little hill of San Miniato and its bright Basilica, and the convent, and the church of the Cronaca, "la Bella Villanella," the purest vessel of Franciscan simplicity. The atmosphere is fresh with spring.

Silvia Settala. Ah, blessed life! Because I have always kept one hope alight, to-day I can bless life.

Lorenzo Gaddi. New life, dear Silvia, good brave soul, so good and so strong! The storm is over. Lucio has come back to you, full of gratitude and of tenderness, after all the evil. It is as if he were born again. Just now he had the eyes of a child.

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Silvia. All his goodness comes back to him when you are with him. When he calls you Maestro his voice becomes so affectionate that it must make your heart beat, the father's heart that you have for him.

In spite of Silvia's joy, the melting away of sorrow, sometimes at a breath she feels cast down with dread. "How this air troubles one, and yet how pure it is!" she exclaims. "All one's hope and despair pass in the wind with the dust of the flowers." She leans out of the window and calls to her little child, Beata, who is running about among the rose bushes, wild with delight. When Beata laughs Silvia says she knows the joy of the flowers when they are filled to the brim with dew. She turns to the Maestro, grave and trembling, and taking his hands.

Silvia. You think that he will really be healed of all his wounds? You think he will come back to me with all his soul? Did you feel that when you saw him, when you talked with him? What did your heart say?

Lorenzo. It seemed to me just now that he had the look of a man who begins to live over again with a new sense of life. He who has seen the face of death cannot but have seen in that instant the face of truth also. The bandage is taken off his eyes. He knows you now wholly.

Silvia. Maestro, Maestro, if you deceive yourself, if it is a vain hope, what will become of me? All my strength is worn out.

She says that it was for the other woman that he wanted to die, in a moment of rage and delirium. She asks if he has awakened without memory; does he see an abyss between his life as it renews itself and the part of himself that he left behind in the mist? She declares the old man dares not console her any longer. Yet he does console her, and makes her feel that when Lucio kissed her hands his whole heart melted into tenderness and humility.

Lorenzo [*looking at her hands*]. Dear, dear hands, brave and beautiful, steadfast and beautiful! Your hands are extraordinarily beautiful, Silvia.

Silvia has never been back to Lucio's studio. It is still the domain, she says, of the other woman, who lives and is implacable.

Lorenzo. Are you sure that she came back, after what happened?

Silvia. Sure. Her insolence has no bounds. She is without pity and without shame.

Lorenzo. And he, Lucio, does he know?

Silvia. He does not know. But he will surely know it sooner or later. She will find a way of letting him know.

Lorenzo. But why?

Silvia. Because she is implacable. Because she will not relinquish her prey.

There is a pause. Then she asks him about the statue, the sphinx, for which Gioconda posed. He tells her it is exquisitely beautiful.

Silvia's sister, Francesca Doni, comes, and also Cosimo Dalbo, Lucio's friend, who has been away on a long visit in Egypt. Francesca does not doubt that Lucio's attempt upon his life has reunited him to her sister.

Lucio soon comes in. He is pale and thin, and his eyes look extraordinarily large with suffering. He is very glad to see Cosimo, and the others leave them together. Lucio speaks in a singular way, as if in a dream, with a mixture of agitation and stupor, but does not wish to talk about himself and questions Cosimo about his pilgrimage.

Cosimo describes the wonderful things he has seen, a Persian monastery, the desert, the Nile, and the Sphinx. Lucio's sphinx, which he saw before his departure, he found exquisitely beautiful. Lucio covers his eyes with both hands and remains for some seconds as if trying to evoke a vision in the darkness.

Lucio [*uncovering his eyes*]. I no longer see it. It escapes me. It comes and goes in a breath, confusedly. If I had it here before me now it would seem new to me: I should cry out. And yet I carved it with these hands! [*He looks at his thin, sensitive hands. His agitation increases.*] I don't know. I don't know. In the beginning of my fever, when I still had the bullet in my flesh, and the continual murmuring of death in my lost soul, I saw it standing at the foot of the bed, lit like a torch, as if I myself had moulded it out of some incandescent material. So for many days and nights I saw it through my eyelids. It grew brighter as my fever increased. When my pulse burned it turned to flame. It was as if all the blood shed at its feet had gone up into it and boiled up in it . . .

Cosimo Dalbo [*uneasily, looking toward the door*]. Lucio, Lucio, you said just now that you knew nothing now, that you did not want to remember anything. Lucio! [*He gently shakes his friend, who remains rigid.*]

Lucio. Do not fear. I have left it all far, far behind me, at the bottom of the sea. The statue was drowned, too, with the rest, after the shipwreck. That is why I can no longer see it except confusedly, as if through deep water.

Cosimo talks of the Nile, and then Silvia returns. She is smiling and animated. She has changed her gown, and is dressed in a clearer, more springlike color, and she carries in her hands a bunch of fresh roses. Lucio looks at her with surprise, as if he discovered a new charm in her. She blushes slightly, and says that she put on the gown while Francesca was there to see how it looked. Cosimo leaves.

The setting sun gilds the room. In the square of the window is seen the pallid sky; San Miniato shines on the height; the air is soft, without a breath of wind. Lucio and Silvia, in the silence, hear the beating of their anxious hearts. He speaks first of a bee that is buzzing in the room. Then she asks him if he would not like to go to Bocca d'Arno for a while. It has always been a dream of hers to pass one spring there. Choked with emotion, he replies that her dream is his, too.

Lucio [*holding out his hands to her as if imploringly*]. Silvia! Silvia!

Silvia [*running to him*]. Do you feel ill? You look paler. Ah, you have tired yourself too much to-day, you are worn out. Sit here, come. Will you sip some of this cordial? Do you feel as if you are going to faint? Tell me!

Lucio [*taking her hands with an outburst of love*]. No, no, Silvia; I never felt so well. You, you sit down, sit here; and I at your feet, at last, with all my soul, to adore you, to adore you!

She sinks back on the divan and he falls on his knees before her. She is convulsed and trembling, and lays her hand on his lips, as if to keep him from speaking. Breath and words pass between her fingers.

Lucio. At last! It was like a flood coming from far

off, a flood of all the beautiful things and all the good things that you have poured out on my life since you began to love me; and my heart overflowed, ah, overflowed so that I staggered under the weight of it, and fainted and died of the pain and the sweetness of it, because I dared not say . . .

Silvia [*her face white, her voice almost extinct*]. No more, say no more!

Lucio. Hear me, hear me! All the sorrows that you have suffered, the wounds that you have received without a cry, the tears that you have hidden lest I should have shame and remorse, the smiles with which you have veiled your agonies, your infinite pity for my wanderings, your invincible courage in the face of death, your hard fight for my life, your hope always alight beside my bed, your watches, cares, continual tremors, expectation, silence, joy, all that is deep, all that is sweet and heroic in you, I know it all, I feel it all, dear soul; and if violence is enough to break a yoke, if blood is enough for redemption (oh, let me speak!), I bless the evening and the hour that brought me dying into this house of your martyrdom and of your faith to receive once more at your hands, these divine hands that tremble, the gift of life.

He presses his convulsed mouth against the palms of her hands, and she gazes at him through the tears that moisten her eyelids, transfigured with unexpected happiness.

Silvia [*in a faint and broken voice*]. No more, say no more! My heart cannot bear it. You suffocate me with joy. I longed for one word from you, only one, no more; and all at once you flood me with love, you fill up every vein, you raise me to the other side of hope, you outpass my dreams, you give me happiness beyond all expectation. Ah, what did you say of my sorrows? What is sorrow endured, what is silence constrained, what is a tear, what is a smile, now, in the face of this flood that bears me away? I feel as if by-and-by, for you, for you, I shall be sorry not to have suffered more. Perhaps I have not reached the depths of sorrow, but I know that I have reached the height of happiness.

She bluntly caresses his head as it lies on her knees.

Silvia. Rise, rise! Come nearer to my heart, rest on

me, give way to my tenderness, press my hands on your eyelids, be silent, dream, call back the deep forces of your life. Ah, it is not me alone that you must love, not me alone, but the love I have for you: love my love! I am not beautiful, I am not worthy of your eyes, I am a humble creature in the shadow; but my love is wonderful, it is on high, on high, it is alone, it is sure as the day, it is stronger than death, it can work miracles; it shall give you all that you ask. You can ask more than you have ever hoped.

She draws him to her heart, raising his head. His eyes are closed, his lips tight set, he is as pale as death, drunk and exhausted with emotion.

Silvia. Rise, rise! Come nearer to my heart; rest on me. Do you not feel that you can give yourself up to me that nothing in the world is surer than my breast? that you can find it always? Ah, I have sometimes thought that this certitude might intoxicate you like glory.

He kneels before her with uplifted face; she with both hands pushes back the hair to uncover his whole forehead.

Silvia. Beautiful, strong forehead, sealed and blessed! May all the germs of spring awaken in your new thoughts!

Trembling she presses her lips to his forehead. Silently he stretches out his arms toward the suppliant. The sunset is like a dawn.

The next day Cosimo Dalbo has come again to see Lucio. He is seated by a table, grave and thoughtful, while Lucio moves about the room, giving way to the anguish that oppresses him. He says that he has had a letter from Gioconda. He opened it. It burnt his fingers.

Cosimo. Well? [*He hesitates. In a voice changed by emotion.*] You still love her?

Lucio [*with a shudder of dread*]. No, no, no!

Cosimo [*looking into the depths of his eyes*]. You no longer love her?

Lucio [*entreatingly*]. Oh, do not torture me. I suffer.

Cosimo. But what is it then that distresses you? [*A pause.*]

Lucio. Every day, at an hour that I know, she waits for me, there, at the foot of the statue, alone. [*Another pause.*]

The two men seem as if they saw before them something strong and living, a Will, evoked by those brief words.

Cosimo. She waits for you? Where? In your studio? How could she get in?

Lucio. She has a key: the key of that time.

Cosimo. She waits for you! She thinks, she desires, then, that you should still belong to her?

Lucio. You have said it.

Cosimo says that she is terrible. One cannot fight against her save at a distance. He must go away and live only for her who saved him from death, and for whom his heart bleeds. Lucio replies that the other will wait for his return. Her power will increase. He will see her from far off, like the guardian of a statue into which he put the most vivid breath of his soul. He denies that he loves her, but says she is the stronger; she knows what conquers and binds him; she is armed with a fascination from which he cannot free his soul except by tearing her out of his heart; must he try again?

Cosimo tells him to ask Gioconda for the key to the studio, or to clear out everything and leave the house; a change is necessary if his life is to renew itself. Lucio, bitter and disheartened, replies that he is right. They will go away somewhere, to a beautiful, solitary place, shake off the dust from old things, set up a monument to liberty.—One morning Gioconda will knock at the new door.—He calls Cosimo a child, to whom the whole thing seems nothing more than a key.

Lucio [*again carried away by excitement*]. I deny nothing, I deny nothing. Would you have me cry to you that I love her? [*Looks about him in an aimless bewilderment. Passes his hand across his forehead with an air of suffering. Lowers his voice.*] You should have let me die. Think, if I who was intoxicated with life, if I who was frantic with strength and pride, if I wanted to die, be sure I knew there was an insuperable necessity for it. Not being able to live either with or without her, I resolved to quit the world. Think: I who looked on the world as my garden, and had every lust after every beauty! Be sure, then, I knew there was an insuperable necessity, an iron destiny. You should have let me die.

Cosimo. You have forgotten the divine miracle cruelly.

Lucio. I am not cruel. Because I was in horror of that cruelty toward which the violence of evil drew me, because I would not trample upon a more than human virtue, because I could not endure the sweetness of a little unconscious voice questioning me, because I wished to keep myself from the worst of all (do you understand?), I made my resolve. And because I am in horror of beginning over again, therefore I hate myself; because to-day I am like one who has taken a narcotic in despair, and who wakes up again, after a sound sleep, and finds the same old despair by his bedside.

At first he was conscious of adoration of his wife. All his soul was prostrate at her feet, knowing all that was divine in her with an intoxication of humility, with a fervor of unspeakable gratitude. Life had a new splendor; he thought he was saved forever. Then he knew that there was something else that must be abolished in him: the force that flows incessantly to his fingers, as if to reproduce . . . he means that perhaps he should have been saved if he had forgotten art also.

Again Cosimo urges him to go to Bocca d'Arno where, between the woods and the sea, he would find once more a little calm and might think over what his attitude should be. Now he is still convalescent. Lucio does not believe that light comes from goodness, but from a profound instinct which turns and hurries his spirit toward the most glorious images of life. He was born to make statues.

Lucio [*lowering his voice*]. The sport of illusion has mated me with a creature who was never meant for me. She is a soul of inestimable price before whom I kneel and worship. But I am not a sculptor of souls. She was not meant for me. When the other appeared before me I thought of all the blocks of marble hidden in the caves of far mountains, that I might arrest in each one of them one of her motions.

Now that he has created his masterpiece, Cosimo says, he surely must be satisfied.

Lucio [*more excitedly*]. A thousand statues, not one! She is always diverse, like a cloud that from instant to instant seems changed without your seeing it change. Every motion of her body destroys one harmony and creates another yet more beautiful. You implore her to stay, to

remain motionless; and across all her immobility there passes a torrent of obscure forces, as thoughts pass in the eyes. Do you understand? Do you understand? The life of the eyes is the look, that indefinable thing, more expressive than any word, than any sound, infinitely deep and yet instantaneous as a breath, swifter than a flash, innumerable, omnipotent; in a word, *the look*. Now imagine the life of the look diffused over all her body. Do you understand? The quiver of an eyelid transfigures a human face and expresses an immensity of joy or sorrow. The eyelashes of the creature whom you love are lowered: the shadow encircles you as the waters encircle an island: they are raised: the flame of summer burns up the world. Another quiver: your soul dissolves like a drop of water; another: you are lord of the universe. Imagine that mystery over all her body! Imagine through all her limbs, from the forehead to the sole of the foot, that flash of lightning, like life! Can one chisel the look? The ancients made their statues blind. Now, imagine, her whole body is like the look.

He looks about him suspiciously, in fear of being heard. He comes nearer to his friend, who listens with increasing emotion as he tells of a wonderful day spent at Carrara with Gioconda, choosing a block of marble for a statue. Everything he saw exalted his spirit. An extraordinary fervor animates him, and at the end he says now Cosimo must understand how furious his impatience is when he knows she is there, alone, at the foot of the sphinx, awaiting him.

But Cosimo does not know that he had begun another statue. It was left unfinished, sketched out in the clay. If the clay dries all is lost. Lucio thought it was lost, but Gioconda has kept it moist and preserved his work. Cosimo reminds him that the other preserved his life.

Lucio [gloomily, lowering his forehead, without looking at his friend, in an almost hard voice]. Which of the two is worth more? Life is intolerable to me if it was only given back with such a dragging weight on it. I have told you: you should have let me die. What greater renunciation can I make than that I have made? Only death could stay the rush of desire that drives my whole being, fatally, toward its own particular good. Now I live again: I

recognize in myself the same man, the same force. Who shall judge me if I follow out my destiny?

Cosimo [*terrified, taking him by the arm as if to restrain him*]. But what will you do? Have you made up your mind?

Struck by the sudden terror in the voice and gesture of his friend, Lucio hesitates.

Lucio [*putting his hands through his hair feverishly*]. What shall I do? What shall I do? Do you know a more cruel torture? I am dizzy; do you understand? If I think that she is there and waiting for me, and the hours are passing, and my strength is being lost, and my ardor burning itself away, dizziness clutches hold of my soul, and I am in fear that I shall be drawn there, perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow. Do you know what that dizziness is? Ah, if I could reopen the wound that they have closed for me!

Cosimo [*trying to lead him toward the window*]. Be calm, be calm, Lucio. Hush! I think I hear the voice . . .

Lucio [*starting*]. Silvia's? [*He turns deathly pale.*]

Silvia and her sister enter. They talk of the delights at Bocca d'Arno at this time of year. Lucio leans out of the window trying to conceal his agitation. Cosimo soon leaves and Lucio sees him to the gate.

Silvia bends her head, knitting her brows as if thinking out some resolution. Then it seems as if she is lifted on a sudden wave of energy. Francesca now tells her that Gaddi has been to see Gioconda to ask her for the key of the studio. Learning that Lucio had not sent him, Gioconda replied that no one else had the right to make such a demand. Silvia draws herself up. She has the right, she says. She will go and face the woman in the place where she is an intruder. Francesca entreats her not to think of it, but Silvia asks when she has ever shrunk from torture or sorrow. Francesca admits that her strength is great, but persists that the ordeal is too much for her.

Silvia says that Gioconda thinks her weak and submissive and is therefore bold; Gioconda thinks she can get the better of her, but she is wrong. Now that Silvia has won back everything she will defend it. If Gioconda resists, Silvia can turn her out. Again Francesca implores her not to be rash. Silvia replies that she will not endure a

second martyrdom. She would rather go away herself and find a little quiet seashore somewhere, and lie down there with Beata and let the sea take them.

Lucio is still outside, talking at the gate, although it is beginning to rain. He seems beside himself. Francesca tells Silvia to call him.

Silvia [*turning, as if seized by a terrible thought*]. I am sure of it. I am sure of it.

Francesca. What are you thinking of now?

Silvia [*pausing and pronouncing the words distinctly, pale but resolute*]. Lucio knows that she is waiting for him.

Fran. He knows? How?

Silvia. There is no doubt, there is no doubt.

Fran. You imagine it.

Silvia. I feel it; I am sure of it.

Fran. But how?

Silvia. It was bound to come. She was bound to find out the way one day or another. How? A letter, perhaps. He has received a letter.

Fran. And you were not on the watch?

Silvia [*disdainfully*]. Even that?

Fran. But perhaps you are mistaken.

Silvia. I am not mistaken. After the old man's visit she wrote. Delay is no longer possible now, not a day, not an hour. You see the danger. Though he may have come back to me with all his soul, though he may have broken with her entirely, though he may have gone back to another life, another happiness, do you not feel what might still be the fascination for him of a woman who says, obstinate and certain: "I am here, I wait?" To know that she is there, that she is waiting there every day, that nothing can dishearten her. Do you see the danger? If Lucio knew this morning that she's waiting for him, he must know to-night, and from my lips, that she waits for him no longer. [*An indomitable energy strengthens and lifts her whole being.*] He shall know it to-night; I promise him. [*She stretches out her hand toward the window, with the gesture of one taking an oath.*]

It is in vain that Francesca renews her entreaties. Silvia replies there is not a moment to lose. They will start at once in Francesca's carriage. She goes into the next room. Francesca calls Lucio from the window. It

is now raining hard and Lucio comes in drenched. He is astonished to find Silvia about to leave the house.

Silvia. I have to go out. I shall not be long. Beata is in there, crying because she wants to come with me. Go and comfort her. Tell her that perhaps I will bring her back something beautiful.

[LUCIO *suddenly takes her hands and looks her fixedly in the eyes.*]

Silvia [*mistress of herself, with a firm and clear accent*]. What is it, Lucio?

He casts down his eyes. She withdraws her hands, shaking his as if in a farewell greeting. The temper of her will rings out in her vivid voice.

Silvia. *Au revoir!* Come, Francesca. It is time.

She goes out rapidly, followed by her sister. Lucio remains with bowed head, staggering under a thought that transfixes him.

The studio is a high and spacious room lighted by a glass roof. In the wall at the back there is a rectangular opening, somewhat larger than a door, leading into the sculptor's studio. A red curtain covers the opening. At the two sides of the opening are two large winged figures, the Nike of Samothrace and the Nike of Pæonius. Wide divans surround the room. Silvia stands in the middle of the room. Francesca's knees tremble and she has taken a seat. Silvia says that they will hear the door open when any one comes, and Francesca can slip out the side way and wait in the carriage. Francesca wants to wait in the passage, near at hand.

While they are listening Silvia is seized by an impulse to see the sphinx. Francesca begs her not to go into the other room, but Silvia raises the curtain and slips between the folds. There are a few instants of silence in which nothing is heard but the rapid breathing of the sister. Suddenly within the purple depths appears the white face of Silvia which seems irradiated with the light of the masterpiece. She has received the supreme gift of beauty: a truce to anguish, a pause to fear. The sound of a heavy door closing is heard. The sisters start. Silvia pushes Francesca out by the small door and closes it.

Silvia is standing with her face turned toward the other

door, her eyes fixed, almost rigid in expectation. Through the profound silence is heard distinctly the turning of the key in the lock. Silvia's attitude does not change. A hand lifts the portière. Gioconda Dianti enters, closing the door behind her. At first she does not perceive the adversary, since she comes from the light into the shadow and a thick veil covers her whole face. When she perceives her she stops with a choked cry. Both remain for some instants facing one another without speaking.

Silvia states who she is. One of them usurps the right of the other, she says; one of them is an intruder. Perhaps it is she herself. Gioconda in a low voice replies, "Perhaps." Silvia says there is a woman who has drawn a man into her net with the worst allurements, who has torn him away from the peace of home, the nobility of art; who has dragged him into a turbid and violent delirium, where he has lost all sense of goodness and justice.

Silvia. There is a woman who has inflicted on a man the sharpest torments that the cruelty of a torturer sick with ennui could desire; who has exhausted and withered him up, keeping a perverse fever continually alight in his veins; who has rendered life intolerable to him; who has armed his hand and turned it against his own life; who, in short, has known that he was wounded to death on a far-off bed, for days and days, while a ceaseless fight went on about him against death; and who has not had remorse, nor pity, nor shame, but has gone back to the sinister place before the blood was wiped off the floor, meditating another attack upon her prey. She has entered here with her face covered, she has spoken in a dull voice, she has let fall a cold word, calculating always on her own audacity and the other's submissiveness. Do you know her?

Gioconda [*without changing her manner*]. She whom I know is different. Only because she is sad in your presence does she speak in a low voice. She respects the great and sorrowful love that has given you life; she admires the virtue that exalts you. While you were speaking she understood that it was only in order to comfort an unutterable despair that your words had created a figure so different from the real person. There is nothing implacable in her; but she obeys a power that may be implacable.

Harshness is of no avail, says Gioconda. She thought

at first that Silvia came simply to learn the truth. The truth that matters, between them, is the truth of love, but Gioconda fears to wound.

Gio. The woman against whom you made such accusations was ardently loved, and—suffer me to say it!—with a glorious love. She did not abase but exalt a strong life. And since the last voice that she heard, a few hours before the terrible deed was accomplished, the last was of love, she believes she is still loved. And this is the truth that matters.

Silvia [*blindly*]. She is wrong, she is wrong . . . You are wrong! He loves you no longer, he loves you no longer; perhaps he never loved you. His was not love but a poisoning, sharp slavery, madness, and thirst. When he suffered on his pillow remembrance passed through his eyes from time to time like a flash of terror. Weeping at my feet, he has blessed the blood that was poured out for his ransom. He does not love you, he does not love you!

Gio. Your love cries out like a drowning man.

Silvia. He does not love you! You have been a gadfly to him, you have made him frantic, you have driven him to his death.

Gio. Not I, not I, have driven him to his death, but you yourself. Yes, he wished to die, that he might cast off a fetter, but not that which bound him to me: another, yours, that which was set upon him by your virtue or your rule, and which made him suffer intolerably.

Only a few hours before he gave way to the horrible thought, there in that room, Gioconda says, he called her the life of his life, of liberty, and art, and joy. He spoke of the insupportableness of his yoke, she pursues, the inevitable weight of goodness, more cruel than any other, and the horror of daily suffering, the repugnance of returning to the house of silence and tears. To escape that anguish he sought death.

Silvia. You lie, you lie! I was far away.

Gio. And you accuse me of having inflicted an infamous torment upon him, of having been his torturer! Ah, your hands, above all your hands of goodness and pardon, prepared for him every night a bed of thorns on which he could not lie down. But, when he entered here where I awaited him as one awaits the creating god, he

was transformed. Before his work he recovered strength, joy, faith.' Yes, a continual fever burned in his blood, kept alight by me (and this is all my pride); but the fire of that fever has fashioned a masterpiece. [*Points toward her statue, hidden by the curtains.*]

Another statue, she says, is ready to leap forth from its covering of clay. That first breath that he infused into it she kept alive as one waters the furrow where the seed lies deep. That the work may go on living her presence is needful. That is why she said perhaps Silvia was the intruder, respecting Silvia's doubt. 'Silvia cannot feel at home there as in her own house. Household affections have no place there, domestic virtues no sanctuary. The place is outside laws and beyond common rights.' Here a sculptor makes his statues. He is alone here with the instruments of his art. Gioconda is an instrument of his art. Nature has sent her to him to bring him a message, and to serve him.

Silvia stands before the curtain, without advancing. An increasing shiver shakes her whole body, betraying her inner agitation; while the words of her rival become more and more sharp and stinging, definite, and at last hostile. Suddenly she turns, panting, impetuous, resolved upon the last defence. Death, she says, has severed every bond. What was interrupted should be lost. Now he is born again, a new man, he aspires toward other conquests. In his eyes is a new light; his strength is impatient to create other forms. All that is behind him, all that is on the other side of the shadow, has no longer any power or value. What does it matter to him that an old piece of clay should fall into dust?

Gioconda replies with greater defiance. She is awaiting Lucio, and she is certain that he will come. An extraordinary change comes over the face of Silvia. It seems as if something strange and horrible enters into her. She is like one suddenly caught in the coils, writhing in the fascination of the serpent, blindly. The ancient fatality of deceit suddenly assails the soul of the pure woman, conquers and contaminates it. At the last words of the enemy she breaks into an unexpected laugh, bitter, atrocious, provocative, that renders her unrecognizable. Gioconda seems overcome by it.

Silvia. Enough, enough. Too many words. The game has lasted too long. Ah, your certainty, your pride! But how could you believe that I should have come here to contest the way with you, to forbid your entrance, to face your audacity, if I had not had a certainty far more sound than yours to warrant me? I know your letter of yesterday, it was shown to me, I know not if with more astonishment or disgust.

Gio. [*overcome*]. No, it is not possible!

Silvia. Yes, it is so. As for the answer, I bring it. Lucio Settala has lost the memory of what has been, and asks to be left in peace. He hopes that your pride will prevent you from becoming importunate.

Gio. [*beside herself*]. He sends you? He himself? It is his answer? His?

Silvia. His, his. I would have spared you this harshness if you had not forced me. Will you go now?

Gio. [*her voice hoarse with rage and shame*]. I am turned out?

Fury suffocates her, and gives her a frantic vigor. The vindictive and devastating wild beast seems to awaken in her. Through her flexible and powerful body passes the same force which contracts the homicidal muscles of feline animals in ambush. The veil, which she has kept on her face like a dark mask, renders more formidable the attitude of one ready to do injury in any way and with any weapon.

Gio. Turned out?

Silvia stands convulsed and livid before the furious woman, and it is not the spectacle of that fury which terrifies her, but something which she sees within herself, something horrible and irreparable; her lie.

It would have been better for Lucio to have died, says Gioconda, than to have survived his soul. All is destroyed, all lost, she exclaims; he will never lift his head again. She declares frantically that she was his strength, his youth, his light! And she carries away with her all that was his power. Fury blinds and suffocates her. It is as if she was invaded by a turbid, destructive will, as by a demon. All her being contracts in the necessity of accomplishing an immediate act of destruction. A sudden thought precipitates that instinct toward an aim.

Gio. And that statue which is mine, which belongs to

me, which he has made out of the life that I have shed from me drop by drop, that statue which is mine . . . [*She rushes like a wild beast toward the closed curtain, raises it and passes through.*] . . . well, I will shatter it, I will cast it down!

Silvia utters a cry and rushes forward to prevent the crime. Both disappear behind the curtain. The rapid breathing of a brief struggle is heard.

Silvia. No, no, it is not true! I lied!

The despairing words are covered by the sound of a mass that tilts and falls, the fracture of the falling statue; then follows another lacerating cry from Silvia, torn by agony from her very vitals.

Francesca Doni appears, mad with terror, running toward the cry, which she recognizes; while Gioconda Dianti is seen between the curtains, still veiled, in the attitude of one who has committed a murder and seeks to escape.

Fran. Assassin! Assassin! [*She stoops to succor her sister, while the other runs out.*] Silvia, Silvia, my sister, my sister! What has she done to you, what has she done to you? Ah, the hands, the hands . . .

Francesca's voice expresses the horror of one who sees something frightful.

Silvia. Take me away! Take me away!

Fran. My God, my God! They were underneath! My God! They are crushed! Water! water! There is none here. Wait.

Silvia. Ah, what agony! I cannot bear it: I am dying. Take me away!

She appears between the red curtains, her face inexpressibly contracted by agony, while her sister bends to support her two hands wrapped in a piece of wet cloth, taken from the clay, through which the blood oozes.

Silvia. What agony! I cannot bear it any longer.

She is about to faint, when all at once Lucio Settala rushes into the room like a madman. She trembles, fixing on him her great eyes full of tears, in which her despairing soul dies.

Silvia. You, you, you!

Fran. [*still supporting the two poor crushed hands that drench the cloth in which the incurable wreck is hidden*]. Support her, support her! She is falling.

Lucio supports the poor bleeding creature almost fainting in his arms. But before losing consciousness, she turns her glazing eyes toward the curtains as if to indicate the statue.

Silvia [*in a dying voice*]. It . . . is safe.

The calm sea, golden sands, and the mouth of the Arno are seen from the windows of a ground-floor room on a September afternoon, as Silvia enters and looks off into the distance with infinitely sad eyes. In her way of moving there is a sense of something wanting, calling up a vague image of clipped wings, a vague sentiment of strength humbled and shorn, of nobility brought low, of broken harmony. Long sleeves hide her arms without hands, which she sometimes lets drop by her sides, and sometimes sets together, drawn a little back as if to hide them in the folds with a movement of shame and sorrow.

From outside, between thick oleanders, appears a girlish figure, La Sirenetta, half fairy and half beggar girl. Silvia calls her in. La Sirenetta asks for Silvia's little girl, and learns that she is expected that day. La Sirenetta offers her a starfish, but Silvia will not take it. The girl says she has great sorrow in her eyes. She can see that something wicked has been done to her.

Instinctively Silvia hides her arms without hands in the folds of her garment with a sorrowful movement which does not escape the notice of La Sirenetta, who suddenly, as if intentionally, drops the end of her apron so that her little sea treasure falls and is scattered over the ground. She picks out a large starfish and asks Silvia to take it. The mutilated woman shakes her head in sign of refusal, pressing her lips together as if to keep down the knot that tightens in her throat.

La Sirenetta. Can't you? Are your hands sick, tied up? [*The mutilated woman nods her head.* LA SIRENETTA'S *voice becomes tremulous with pity.*] Did you fall into the fire? Were you burnt? Do they still hurt? Or are they getting better?

Silvia [*in a scarcely audible voice*]. I haven't any hands.

La S. [*rising in affright*]. You haven't any! They have cut them off? No hands? [*The mutilated woman nods her head, frightfully pale. The other shivers with hor-*

ELEONORA DUSE AS SILVIA SETTALA

Sil. I stretched out my hands too violently toward a good thing that fate denied me

ror.] No, no, no! It isn't true. [*She keeps her eyes fixed on the folds of the garment in which the mutilated woman hides her arms.*] Tell me it isn't true.

Silvia. I haven't any hands.

La S. Why? why?

Silvia says that she gave away her hands—to her love.

Francesca and Lorenzo Gaddi enter. They have left Beata a little way behind so that she should not come to Silvia unexpectedly. The old man instinctively stretches out his hands to Silvia. She bends slightly and offers him her forehead, which he touches with his lips. Concealing his emotion, he tells her how happy he is to see her again. The sea helps her he thinks. He says it is always a great comforter.

Silvia tells them that she asked so much, that to obtain it, she stooped to tell a lie: she came out mutilated, maimed, in punishment for her lie. She had stretched out her hands too violently toward a good thing that fate had denied her. She does not lament or weep. Since she must live she will live. Perhaps one day her soul will be healed. She says she is strong, ready to see Beata, but cannot restrain her emotion and goes out to hide her tears.

Lorenzo. Yes, it is too frightful a fate. I remember what you said to her so tenderly, as you looked at her, on that day in April: "You seem as if you had wings!" The beauty and lightness of her hands gave her the aspect of a winged thing. There was in her a kind of incessant quiver. Now it is as if she dragged herself along.

Fran. And it was a useless sacrifice, like all the others; it has done nothing, changed nothing: that is where it is so frightful a fate. If Lucio had stayed with her, I believe she would have been happy to have been able to give that last proof, to have been able to sacrifice for him her living hands. But she knows now all the truth, in all its nakedness. Ah, what an infamous thing! Would you have believed that Lucio was capable of it? Tell me.

Lorenzo. He, too, has his fate, and he obeys it. As he was not master of his death, so he is not master of his life. I saw him yesterday. He had written me at Fort dei Marmi to ask me to go to the quarry and send him a block. I saw him yesterday in his studio. His face is so thin that

it seems burnt up in the fire of his eyes. When he speaks he becomes strangely excited. It troubled me. He works, works, works, with a terrible fury: perhaps he is seeking to rid himself of a thought that gnaws him.

Fran. The statue is still there?

Lorenzo. It is still there, without arms. He has left it so: he would not restore it. So, on the pedestal, it looks really like an ancient marble, dug up in one of the Cyclades. There is in it something sacred and tragic, after the divine immolation.

Fran. [*in a low voice*]. And that woman, the Gioconda, was there?

Lorenzo. She was there, silent. When one looks at her, and thinks that she is the cause of so much evil, truly one cannot curse her in his heart; no, one cannot, when one looks at her. I have never seen so great a mystery in mortal flesh.

There is a pause. The old man and the sister remain in thought for some instants with bowed heads. Presently Francesca says that now it is time to bring the little one to her mother and let her learn the truth. Silvia reappears on the threshold. The old man exhorts her to have courage for this last ordeal, and goes out with the sister. La Sirenetta comes running back. She notices that Silvia's eyes are burning. Her heart hurts her too much, she says.

Silvia. Don't speak. I cannot crush my heart. [*She is convulsed, no longer able to endure the agony of waiting.*] She is coming now. She is coming.

The Voice of Beata [*from among the oleanders*]. Mamma! Mamma! [*The mother starts, and turns frightfully pallid.*] Mamma!

The child rushes toward her mother with a cry of joy, her face lit up, heated, her hair in disorder, panting after a long run, carrying an untidy bunch of flowers. As she runs in, the bunch falls. The mutilated woman stoops toward the little arms that clasp her neck, and offers her death-like face to the furious kisses.

Silvia. Beata! Beata!

Beata [*panting*]. Ah, how I have run, how I have run! I ran away from them, all alone. I ran, I ran. They didn't want to let me come. Ah, but I ran away from

them, with my bunch of flowers. [*Covers her mother's face with fresh kisses.*]

Silvia. You are all damp with sweat, you are hot, burning . . . My God!

In her rush of tenderness she instinctively makes a movement as if to wipe the child's face; but stops and hides her arms in the folds of her garments; and a shiver of visible horror runs through her.

Beata. Why don't you take me up? Why don't you put your arms around me? Take me up, take me up, mamma!

She rises on tiptoe, to be caught into her mother's embrace. The mother takes a step backward, blindly.

Silvia. Beata!

Beata [*following her*]. Don't you want me? don't you want me?

Silvia. Beata!

She tries to feign a smile with her ashen lips, distorted by unspeakable sorrow.

Beata. Is it for fun? What are you hiding? Oh, give me what you are hiding!

Silvia. Beata! Beata!

Beata. I have brought you flowers, such a lot of flowers. Do you see? do you see? [*As she turns to pick up the fallen bunch, she perceives her little wild friend, and remembers her.*] Oh, Sirenetta! Are you there?

La Sirenetta is there, before the window, standing, a silent witness, with her eyes fixed on the sorrowful mother. As the repeated breath of the wind passes between the fronds of an arbutus and makes it tremble, so the sorrow of the mother seems to invest and penetrate that slender body which the oblique rays of the sun ring with bands of gold.

La S. Do you see what a lot? All for you! [*The child picks up the bunch.*] Take it! [*She runs toward her mother again, who steps back.*]

Silvia. Beata! Beata!

Beata [*astonished*]. Don't you want them? Take them! Take them!

Silvia. Beata!

Overcome with sorrow, as if stricken by an unendurable blow, she falls on her knees before her frightened child;

and a flood of tears, that bursts from her eyes like blood from a wound, bathes her face.

Beata. You are crying! You are crying?

Frightened, she throws herself upon her mother's breast with all her flowers. La Sirenetta, who has also fallen on her knees, lays her forehead and the palms of her hands upon the ground.

PILLARS OF SOCIETY*

By Henrik Ibsen

First played in Copenhagen on November 18, 1877.

Argument: Consul Bernick, the leading citizen of a Norwegian coast town, established his initial success by the sacrifice of his young brother-in-law, Johan, who agreed to act as scapegoat for him and emigrate to America. Johan returns some years later and falls in love with the daughter of the woman with whom he was supposed to have had a scandalous affair, but feels bound by his promise not to defend himself against the false charges that are heaped upon him. Bernick has the alternative of making reparation to those whom he has wronged, or of insuring the permanence of his security by a horrible crime.

Several ladies are sewing in a large conservatory room in the house of Consul Bernick. The back wall is composed almost entirely of plateglass. Through it is an open doorway to a veranda, shaded by an awning, beyond which is a flight of steps leading down to a garden that borders on a street with a row of small, brightly painted houses on the farther side.

On the right-hand side of the room is a door to Consul Bernick's office, at which stands Aune, the foreman of Bernick's shipyard, talking with the secretary. The secretary says the Consul is having an important conference and cannot see Aune, but has commissioned him to say that Aune must stop giving Saturday lectures to the workmen in which he has been telling them that they are going to be injured by machinery and new methods of work. Aune thinks he is supporting society; Bernick believes that Aune is undermining it.

At a moment when Mrs. Bernick has left her guests

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they begin to gossip with flying tongues. Mrs. Lynge is a newcomer in the community, and, of course, Mrs. Rummel and Mrs. Holt must put her on her guard so that she won't make blunders. The fact is that this young girl, Dina, who lives at the Consul's house as if adopted by him, and who is cared for so kindly by his sister Martha, was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dorf, a pair of strolling actors.

The hero of the scandal was Mrs. Bernick's brother, Johan Tönnesen, according to Mrs. Rummel, for it was he who jumped out of the back window of Dorf's house one night when Dorf came back unexpectedly. At the same time it was said that Johan had been making free with the cash box in Bernick's office. Anyway, he ran away to America. He was the dark spot on the sun of the Bernicks' happiness.

There was another dark spot, too: Lona Kessel, an elder step-sister of Mrs. Bernick and Johan, who was considered rather a strange creature because she cut her hair short and went about in men's shoes in rainy weather, slapped Bernick's face when he announced his engagement, and followed Johan to America to take care of him.

Dina is made very unhappy by being always made aware that she is an outsider, and knowing that people are always talking about her. Most unbearable of all is the extreme sweetness shown her by these ladies. The schoolmaster, Doctor Rörlund, is considerably in love with her, but feels that for a thousand considerations he cannot very well show it, being as he is a pillar of the society in which he lives.

Doctor Rörlund wants to be very sure that people will not misinterpret his motives. He wishes to make a bargain with Dina that when the time comes when circumstances shall permit him to offer his hand, she will take it and be his wife. Dina gives her consent.

The very important business conference that has been engaging Consul Bernick's attention relates to the establishment of a railway to the town. The year before he defeated the project, but the plan then was to have a line along the coast. As a public-spirited citizen he could not tolerate anything so detrimental to the town. Incidentally, the railroad would have diverted the commerce

handled by his ships. He has now agreed to an inland line, however, with a branch coming down their way, which should increase the trade of the place. It will open up forests and mineral deposits and develop the use of the great water power above them.

A cable dispatch comes which Bernick finds rather shocking. It is instructions from the American owners of the *Indian Girl*, now at his shipyard, to send her out with the fewest possible repairs. To do this, he says, would be to risk the lives of eighteen men. Not a single shipowner in his country would give such an order.

A ship has just come to the port with a circus and the procession passes through the street. A woman whom the Bernicks and their guests take at first to be the wife of the circus manager is Lona Hessel. She has come back with her brother Johan.

To the extreme annoyance of Bernick, he finds that Johan has struck up quite a friendship with Dina in a very short time after his arrival. He remarks to his wife peevishly that he cannot see what induced Johan to return. She is inclined to think Johan might be arrested on account of the old defalcation. He replies tartly that that was all idle gossip, and tells her to put all those old stories out of her head. They torture him, he adds.

It is dreadful that Johan had to come back just at this time, Bernick continues, just when so much depends on good feeling in the press and in the town. He is afraid people will rake up those old stories, as his wife has, and declares that the ne'er-do-wells are sure to make a scandal one way or another, especially Lona; it is a calamity to have such people in one's family. The effect of this appreciation of her brother and sister at last is to make Mrs. Bernick cry, but the Consul says that her tears will not put a stop to the chatter.

The foreman of the shipyard comes to the house again, and Bernick gives him a lecture. He is altogether displeased at the way things are going at the yard. The *Palm Tree* should have been at sea long ago, and there lies the *Indian Girl* with nothing done on her after five weeks. Aune says the vessel's bottom is as rotten as matchwood; the more they patch it the worse it gets. Bernick suspects the trouble is that Aune won't use the new machines.

Bernick is trying to make the town progressive and Aune is opposing him.

Aune admits that he is afraid, afraid that the machines will take the bread out of the mouths of hundreds of poor folks. Bernick's reply is that when printing was discovered many copyists had to starve. But he didn't send for Aune to argue with him. It was to tell him that the *Indian Girl* must be ready to sail the day after to-morrow. Aune assures him that is impossible. If the ship is not cleared in two days, Bernick declares, he will dismiss Aune from his service.

This threat is itself a blow to the foreman. Discharge would mean the breaking up of the little community he has been able to support and hold together, his family; but Bernick says that Aune is standing out against him because he will not prove the superiority of machinery to manual labor. Bernick is actuated by public spirit, though of course he doesn't want the papers to say that his men have been giving all their attention to his own ships. At last Aune gives in. He promises to have the *Indian Girl* ready.

The next thing to happen is that word is brought that the scandal threatened by the return of Johan and Lona is already going full blast, owing to their persistence in going about town with Dina. It really seems as though Johan and Lona did not wish to have the fact overlooked that they belong to the first family in the place. Lona and Johan come to call. They have been much impressed by evidences of Bernick's munificence to the town, for he has given public gardens and has his name over the entrance, and has built a new schoolhouse and gas and water works.

Before long Bernick finds himself alone with Johan. Grasping both his brother-in-law's hands, he shakes and presses them warmly, saying he must thank him for everything, his house and home, his domestic happiness, his whole position in society. Johan was not the guilty one, but as he was a single man, and an orphan, he had the generosity to turn appearances against himself. He makes light of his action, saying that most any young fellow would have been glad of an excuse to make a dash

into the world when it only meant a month's town talk.

The story is not entirely forgotten, however, even yet, Bernick says. Johan doesn't mind. He is going back soon to his farm. In fact, he only returned to satisfy Lona, over whom had come a sort of homesickness, although she would not admit it. She did not wish to leave Johan alone, fearing the wild tendencies that he was supposed to have, and finally, to relieve her mind, as she had slaved for him so when they were very poor, he told her he was not the scapegrace she believed. Then, if he was innocent she said, he had no reason for not coming with her.

Johan is anxious to hear about Dina's parents. Dorf deserted his wife, he learns, and was afterward killed in a drinking bout. Mrs. Dorf wasted away and died of sickness and want. She asked Bernick for nothing; would accept nothing. They took care of the little girl, and Bernick's sister, Martha, educated her. It appears that Bernick has never given his sister the share she should have had in their inheritance because he had rather a hard pull to tide things over when he first took up the business.

Johan. Poor Martha!

Bernick. Poor! Why so? You don't suppose I let her want for anything? Oh, no; I think I may say I am a good brother to her. Of course she lives here and has her meals with us; her salary as a teacher is quite enough for her dress, and—what can a single woman want more?

Johan. H'm; that's not the way we think in America.

Ber. No, I daresay not; there are too many agitators at work over there. But here, in our little circle, where, thank heaven, corruption has not as yet managed to creep in—here women are content with a modest and unobtrusive position. For the rest, it is Martha's own fault; she could have been provided for long ago if she had cared to.

Johan. You mean she could have married?

Ber. Yes, and married very well, too; she has had several good offers. Strangely enough!—a woman without money, no longer young, and quite insignificant.

Johan. Insignificant?

Ber. Oh, I am not blaming her at all. Indeed, I would not have her otherwise. In a large house like ours,

you know, it is always convenient to have some steady-going person like her whom one can put to anything that may turn up.

Bernick is called away on business, and Johan has a talk with Martha. He doesn't think she seems very glad to see him.

Martha. I have waited so long, Johan—too long.

Johan. Waited? For me to come?

Mar. Yes.

Johan. And why did you think I would come?

Mar. To expiate where you had sinned.

Johan. I?

Mar. Have you forgotten that a woman died in shame and need for your sake? Have you forgotten that by your fault a young girl's best years have been embittered?

Johan. And you say this to me? Martha, has your brother never——?

Mar. What of him?

Johan. Has he never——? Oh, I mean has he never said so much as a word in my defence?

Mar. Ah, Johan, you know Karsten's strict principles.

Martha reminds Johan of a letter he wrote her when he went away asking her to believe in him. She has believed in him. She believed that all the bad things that were rumored of him had been done in desperation, without thought and without purpose. This scarcely satisfies him. She has tried to fulfil the duties that he left behind. She tells him this that he may have less to reproach himself with. She has been a mother to the much-wronged child.

Johan. And thrown away your whole life in doing so!

Mar. It has not been thrown away. But you have been long in coming, Johan.

He starts to say something, breaks off, and thanks her for her faithful friendship. Martha sees Mrs. Bernick coming with Lona Hessel and doesn't want them to—— She also breaks off her sentence and goes out. Lona has something to say to Johan of which Mrs. Bernick disapproves, but that does not restrain Lona. She tells Johan to look well at Dina. Johan says he has. Her reply is that he should look to some purpose, for Dina is the very thing for him. Lona thinks Johan needs a little help in

such matters; he has never had much of an eye for women. As for the last statement, Mrs. Bernick thinks they have had sad cause to entertain doubts.

Lona insists that the match is very desirable, but Mrs. Bernick expresses great horror at her "American" ideas; a man like her husband, who is so strict in his morality, will never permit it. She thinks that Lona must hate him very much still for saying that he is no more moral than other men, and bursting into tears, she declares that Lona has always envied her happiness, and now comes back to heap trouble on her and show the town what sort of a family her husband married into.

Bernick tells his secretary to send four hundred crowns for a dinner for the poor, and then takes advantage of the opportunity to say to Lona that he has been burning for a chance to talk openly with her and to beg her forgiveness. It was only a momentary aberration that made him pursue Dina's mother; at one time he really, honestly loved Lona. Then as for marrying Betty, he was absolutely forced to do that for the sake of the money, to save from ruin the old and respected house of Bernick.

That he was saving the house of Bernick at the expense of a woman did not occur to him, in fact it seems to him now just as well for Lona's happiness that he did not marry her, though he has to confess that her happiness was not what he was considering when he played her false. However, she should not suppose that he acted upon selfish motives, for he had the welfare of hundreds, aye, thousands, to consider, for the welfare of the whole community depended upon him.

Lona. Is it for the sake of the community then, that for these fifteen years you have stood upon a lie?

Ber. A lie?

Lona. The threefold lie. First the lie toward me; then the lie toward Betty; then the lie toward Johan.

He begs her, out of consideration for Betty, not to ask him to speak now. Johan, he says, will not require it.

Lona. But you yourself, Karsten? Is there not something within you that longs to get clear of the lie?

Ber. You would have me voluntarily sacrifice my domestic happiness and my position in society!

Lona. What right have you to stand where you are standing?

Ber. For fifteen years I have every day earned a clearer right—by my whole life, by all I have labored for, by all I have achieved.

Lona. Yes, you have labored for much and achieved much, both for yourself and others. You are the richest and most influential man in the town; they have to bow before your will, all of them, because you are held to be a man without stain or flaw—your home is a model, your life is a model. But all this magnificence, and you yourself along with it, stand on a trembling quicksand. A moment may come, a word may be spoken—and, if you do not save yourself in time, you and all your grandeur go to the bottom.

Ber. Lona—what did you come here to do?

Lona. To help you to get firm ground under your feet, Karsten.

Ber. Revenge! You want to revenge yourself. I thought as much! But you will not succeed! There is only one who has a right to speak, and he is silent.

Lona. Johan?

Ber. Yes, Johan. If any one else accuses me, I shall deny everything. If you try to crush me, I shall fight for my life. You will never succeed, I tell you! He who could destroy me will not speak—and he is going away again.

They are interrupted by the arrival of Rummel and Vigeland, who report that the men who were in favor of the seaboard railroad declare that private interests are lurking behind the new proposal. Dr. Rörlund comes next with the complaint that the young girl who has found an asylum beneath Bernick's roof is showing herself in the public streets with the person from whom above all others she should be kept furthest apart. Bernick excuses himself, saying that he is called away suddenly to the Trade Council, but he cannot escape quite so easily, for Johan and Dina are dragged in to answer to the charge of planning to go to America together.

Mrs. Bernick. Oh, Johan—how can you!

Rörlund. Can this be true? Such a crying scandal! By what vile arts have you——?

Johan. What, what, man? What are you saying?

Rör. Answer me, Dina: is this your intention?—deliberately formed, and of your own free will?

Dina. I must get away from here.

Rör. But with him—with him!

Dina. Tell me of any one else that has courage to set me free?

Rör. Then you shall know who he is.

Johan. Be silent!

Ber. Not a word more!

Rör. Then I should ill serve the community over whose manners and morals it is my duty to keep watch; and I should act most indefensibly toward this young girl, in whose training I have borne an important share, and who is to me——

Johan. Take care what you are doing!

Rör. She shall know it! Dina, it was this man who caused all your mother's misfortune and shame.

Ber. Rector——!

Dina. He! [*To* JOHAN.] Is this true?

Johan. Karsten, do you answer!

Ber. Not a word more! Not a word more to-day.

Dina. Then it is true.

Rör. True, true! And more than that. This person, in whom you were about to place your trust, did not run away empty-handed—Mrs. Bernick's strong-box—the Consul can bear witness!

Lona. Liar!

Ber. Ah——!

Mrs. B. O God! O God!

Johan [*goes toward him with uplifted arm*]. You dare to——!

Lona [*keeping him back*]. Don't strike him, Johan.

Rör. Yes, yes; assault me if you like. But the truth shall out; and this is the truth. Consul Bernick has said so himself; it is notorious to the whole town. Now, Dina, now you know him.

[*A short pause.*]

Johan [*softly seizing* BERNICK'S *arm.*] Karsten, Karsten, what have you done?

Mrs. B. [*softly, in tears*]. Oh, Karsten, that I should bring all this shame upon you!

Bernick departs hastily in response to further urging

to bring all his moral predominance to the support of society at the Trade Council.

Olaf Bernick is the thirteen-year-old son of the Consul. He has adventurous leanings that his father does not like, and the Consul, having learned that Olaf stole out of the house at night and went out in a fishing boat, has just given the boy a thrashing that he will be likely to remember. As he puts away the cane, however, he tells his wife that the young rascal is now threatening to run away for good. "Just let him try it," says the Consul. Mrs. Bernick may not care very much what becomes of Olaf, but he needs some one to carry on his work in the world.

The secretary closes the door carefully and informs Bernick that he believes Aune intends to send the *Indian Girl* to the bottom with every soul on board. He has been down to the shipyard and observed that the repairs were being rushed, but so far as he could see not a stick of new timber had been put in. It was only plugged and puttied up and covered with plates and tarpaulins. He declares the ship will go to the bottom like a cracked pot.

Ber. Why, this is horrible! What do you think can be his motive?

Krap. He probably wants to bring the machines into discredit; wants to revenge himself; wants to have the old workmen taken on again.

Ber. And for that he would send all these men to their death?

Krap. He has been heard to say that the crew of the *Indian Girl* are brute beasts, not men.

Ber. Yes, yes, that may be; but does he not think of the great loss of capital?

Krap. Aune is not over-fond of capital, Consul.

Ber. True enough; he is an agitator and mischief-maker; but such a piece of villainy as this——! I'll tell you what, Mr. Krap: this affair must be looked into again. Not a word of it to any one. Our yard would lose its reputation if this came to people's ears.

Bernick tells Krap to look over the ship again and make absolutely sure that what he says is true, and then if it is he will report the case so as to make a favorable impression on the press and the public.

At the Trade Council the day before Bernick and his friends carried everything before them, but now he learns that the editor of the town paper has got hold of a rumor that there has been a great buying up of the property along the branch line. It is said that a lawyer has been acting on a secret commission to buy up all the forests, mining rights, and water power. People already believe it and are very indignant. Many are saying that they will strike their names from the lists.

Bernick makes a fuller explanation to Lona Hessel. There was no actual theft of money, but the rumor that there had been helped him with creditors. He could ask for time and they did not doubt the solidity of the firm, which had been very badly managed by his mother. So he clutched at the rumor like a drowning man clutching at a straw. Bernick maintains that every man has some dark secret that must be kept out of sight.

Lona. And you call yourself pillars of society.

Ber. Society has none better.

Lona. Then what does it matter whether such a society is supported or not? What is it that passes current here? Lies and shams—nothing else. Here are you, the first man of the town, prosperous, powerful, looked up to by every one—you who have set the brand of crime upon an innocent man.

Bernick is prepared to atone for the wrong, he says, by paying whatever Johan demands. Lona replies that the truth is what Johan must have, as Johan discovered when he began to court Dina, and Johan comes to tell Bernick so himself.

Ber. And just at this moment I require all my moral authority, and therefore I cannot speak out.

Johan. I don't care so much about the falsehoods you have trumped up at my expense; it is the other thing that you must take upon your own shoulders. Dina shall be my wife, and I will live here, here in this town along with her.

Lona. You will?

Ber. With Dina! As your wife? Here, in this town?

Johan. Yes, just here. I will stay here to outface all these liars and backbiters. And that I may win her, you must set me free.

Bernick says Johan has forgotten what society is, or he would realize that such a step would crush him to the dust.

Johan. I can only repeat that I shall make Madam Dorf's daughter my wife, and live with her in this town.

Ber. [*wipes the perspiration from his forehead*]. Hear me, Johan—and you, too, Lona. My position at this moment is not an ordinary one. I am so situated that if you strike this blow you destroy me utterly, and not only me but also a great and golden opportunity for the community which was, after all, the home of your childhood.

Johan. And if I do not strike the blow I destroy all that makes my own future of value to me.

Bernick says that it is he who has bought up the property along the line of the inland railway. If the plan goes through he will be a millionaire. If not, he is ruined. With the unblemished reputation he has borne hitherto he can carry the whole thing upon his shoulders. He pleads that society itself forces him to adopt indirect methods. If every one could have entered the undertaking it would have been bungled and spoiled. He is the only man in the place of sufficient business ability to carry it through, and in his hands the property will be of great permanent benefit to the community.

Lona now urges Johan to go away and remain silent.

Johan. I must and will make Dina my wife. So I shall sail to-morrow in the *Indian Girl*——

Ber. The *Indian Girl?*

Johan. Yes; the captain has promised to take me. I shall go across, I tell you, sell my farm, and settle up my affairs. In two months I shall be back again.

Ber. And then you will tell all?

Johan. Then the wrongdoer must take up his own burden.

Bernick says he will fight for his life; he will deny everything, but Johan has his confession in two letters. He will produce them if forced to do so.

Johan. The wind is fair. In three weeks I shall be in New York—if the *Indian Girl* doesn't go to the bottom.

Ber. [*starting*]. Go to the bottom? Why should the *Indian Girl* go to the bottom?

Johan. That's just what I say.

Ber. [*almost inaudibly*]. Go to the bottom?

Johan leaves and Lona follows him. The next moment Aune enters the room. He wants to know if Bernick is still firmly determined to turn him adrift if the *Indian Girl* is not ready for sea the following day. Bernick says there is no need of going over that again. He supposes Aune can assure him that the repairs have been made thoroughly. Aune replies that the time given him for the work was very short, but that the weather is fine and it is midsummer.

Ber. Then—the *Indian Girl* sails——

Aune. To-morrow?

Ber. Yes.

Aune bows and goes out. Bernick is irresolute for a moment, half inclined to call Aune back. He starts after him, but just then Krap enters. Krap was too late to get aboard the ship again. They were just hauling her out of the dock, but he thinks their haste suspicious. Bernick declares that Aune has entirely satisfied him in regard to the repairs. Krap has no sooner left than Bernick learns that the storm signals have been hoisted, and that the barometer has been falling very rapidly.

Doctor Rörlund coming in finds the Consul quite pale and upset. Bernick wants to ask the doctor a question.

Ber. A thought has occurred to me lately. When one stands on the threshold of a great undertaking that is to promote the welfare of thousands—if a single sacrifice should be demanded——?

Rör. How do you mean?

Ber. Take, for example, a man who is starting a large manufactory. He knows very well—for all experience has taught him—that sooner or later, in the working of that manufactory, human life will be lost.

Rör. Yes, it is only too probable.

Ber. Or suppose he is about to open a mine. He takes into his service both fathers of families and young men in the heyday of life. May it not be predicted with certainty that some will perish in the undertaking?

Rör. Unhappily there can be little doubt of that.

Ber. Well, such a man, then, knows beforehand that his enterprise will undoubtedly, some time or other, lead to the loss of life. But the undertaking is for the greater good of the greater number; for every life it costs, it will

with equal certainty, promote the welfare of many hundreds.

Rör. Ah, you are thinking of the railway—of all the dangerous tunnellings, and blastings, and that sort of thing——

Ber. Yes—yes, of course—I am thinking of the railway. And, besides, the railway will bring with it both manufactories and mines. But don't you think that——

Rör. My dear Consul, you are almost too scrupulous. If you place the affair in the hands of Providence——

Ber. Yes, yes, of course; Providence——

Rör. ——you can have nothing to reproach yourself with. Go on and prosper with the railway.

Ber. Yes, but let us take a peculiar case. Let us suppose a blasting has to be made at a dangerous place; and unless it is carried out, the railway will come to a standstill. Suppose the engineer knows that it will cost the life of the workman who fires the fuse; but fired it must be, and it is the engineer's duty to send a workman to do it.

Rör. H'm——

Ber. I know what you will say: It would be heroic if the engineer himself took the match and went and fired the fuse. But no one does such things. So he must sacrifice a workman.

Rör. No engineer among us would ever do that.

Ber. No engineer in the great nations would think twice about doing it.

Rör. In the great nations? No, I daresay not. In those corrupt and unscrupulous communities——

Ber. Oh, those communities have their good points, too.

Rör. Can you say that—you, who yourself——?

Ber. In the great nations one has at least elbowroom for useful enterprise. There men have the courage to sacrifice something for a great cause. But here one is hampered by all sorts of petty considerations.

Rör. Is a human life a petty consideration?

Ber. When that human life is a menace to the welfare of thousands.

Rör. But you are putting quite inconceivable cases, Consul! I don't understand you to-day. And then you refer me to the great communities. Yes, there—what does

a human life count for there? They think no more of staking life than of staking capital. But we, I hope, look at things from an entirely different moral standpoint. Think of our exemplary shipowners! Name me a single merchant here among us who, for the sake of paltry profit, would sacrifice one human life! And then think of those scoundrels in the great communities who enrich themselves by sending out one unseaworthy ship after another——

Ber. I am not speaking of unseaworthy ships!

Rör. But I am, Consul.

Ber. Yes, but to what purpose? It has nothing to do with the question. Oh, these little craven qualms of conscience! If a general among us were to lead his troops under fire and get some of them shot he would never sleep o' nights after it. Elsewhere it is very different.

At this moment Johan enters the room. His insistence that Dina shall be his wife provokes Dr. Rörlund to come out flatly before the household, including Mrs. Bernick, Martha, and Dina. He tells Dina she is a very thoughtless girl, though he does not blame her as she has been so long without the moral support she should have had. Dina urges him not to speak now. He is not to be dissuaded, although he says her conduct has made it harder for him. He tells them that Dina is betrothed to him. She admits it.

This circumstance, Dr. Rörlund thinks, will paralyze all Johan's "arts of seduction." Mrs. Bernick leads Dina away and Dr. Rörlund follows them.

Ber. Johan, you won't sail now with the *Indian Girl.*

Johan. Now more than ever.

Ber. Then you will not come back again.

Johan. I shall come back.

Ber. After this? What would you do after this?

Johan. Revenge myself on the whole band of you; crush as many of you as I can.

The *Indian Girl's* sailing papers are brought to Bernick and he gives his final authority for her to clear. Bernick goes into his office. Olaf, who is supposed to be locked up in his room, steals in quietly. He confides in a friend that he may yet go buffalo hunting in America. His uncle Johan is sailing for America.

Krap comes back to inform the Consul that it is blowing up to a hurricane. He waits a moment for an answer, then, opening the door a little wider, asks if the *Indian Girl* is to sail in spite of it. Bernick's voice answers from the office, "The *Indian Girl* is to sail in spite of it."

The afternoon is stormy, half dark and growing darker. The garden room at Consul Bernick's house is brilliantly illuminated. A surprise has been arranged for the worthy Consul. The whole town is coming to do him homage as its leading citizen.

The sound of voices comes up from the water-front. It is the sailors singing as they haul out the *Indian Girl* to her buoy.

Bernick says he cannot address his townsfolk. He is not feeling well. Rummel agrees that he is not looking well, but tells him to pull himself together. The affair is very important. It will raise the effervescent enthusiasm of the crowd, which is the one thing needed. Again Bernick protests that he cannot speak this evening. He asks Rummel to do so for him. Rummel explains that the Consul's speech is to take the form of a toast to the welfare of the community, but he seems to think that Bernick is not listening.

Ber. Yes—yes, I am. Tell me, do you think the sea is running very high outside?

Rummel. Oh, you are anxious on account of the *Palm Tree?* She's well insured, isn't she?

Ber. Yes, insured, but——

Rum. And in good repair; that's the main thing.

They go into the office.

Johan steals into the room by a door at one side, in travelling dress, with a bag over his shoulder, and Martha and Dina, both wearing cloaks and Dina with a small travelling bag in her hand, come in at the other side. Dina goes to Johan and tells him to take her with him. She says she has never loved Dr. Rörlund, but that she means to support herself for a while before she will marry Johan. They hurry off to catch the ship. Olaf has already climbed down quietly from his window with a plaid over his shoulder and a bundle in his hand and gone down toward the water-front.

Lona. Now we two must hold together, Martha.

Mar. Can I be anything to you?

Lona. Who more? We two foster mothers—have we not both lost our children? Now we are alone.

Mar. Yes, alone. So now I will tell you this—I have loved him more than all the world.

Lona. Martha! [*Seizes her arm.*] Is this the truth?

Mar. My whole life lies in the words. I have loved him, and waited for him. From summer to summer I have looked for his coming. And then he came—but he did not see me.

Lona. Loved him! And it was you that gave his happiness into his hands.

Mar. What else should I do, since I love him? Yes, I have loved him. I have lived my whole life for him, ever since he went away. What reason had I to hope, you ask? Oh, I think I had some reason. But then, when he came again—it seemed as if everything were wiped out of his memory. He did not see me.

Bernick tells Lona that she cannot conceive how unspeakably alone he feels in the narrow, stunted society in which he lives. He says he ought never to have given her up. His wife has never been anything that he required.

Lona. Because you have never shared your life work with her. Because you have never placed her in a free and true relation to you. Because you have allowed her to go on pining under the weight of shame you had cast upon those nearest her.

Ber. Yes, yes, yes; falsehood and hollowness are at the bottom of it all.

Lona. Then why not break with all this falsehood and hollowness?

Ber. Now? It is too late now, Lona.

Bernick says he is working for his son. A time will come when truth will find its way into the social order, and upon it Olaf shall found a happier life than his father's. Sooner or later the curse of his inheritance must pass away.

Lona tells Bernick that Johan will never come back, that he has gone forever and Dina with him. That is how these two strike his seraphic society in the face.

Ber. Gone!—she, too! In the *Indian Girl?*

Lona. No; he dared not trust such a precious freight

to a ship with so ruffianly a crew. Johan and Dina have sailed in the *Palm Tree*.

Ber. Ah! Then it was—to no purpose—— [*Rushes to the door of his office, tears it open, and calls in.*] Krap, stop the *Indian Girl*. She mustn't sail to-night.

Krap [*inside*]. The *Indian Girl* is already standing out to sea, Consul.

Ber. [*shuts the door and says feebly*]. Too late—and all for nothing.

Lona asks him what he means, but he will not tell her. Then she shows him the two old letters which he wrote to Johan years before in which he admitted his wrong-doing. He fears that she is going to unmask him publicly, when the procession reaches the house.

Lona. I did not come here to unmask you, but to try if I could not move you to throw off the mask of your own accord. I have failed. Remain standing in the lie. See: I tear your two letters to shreds. Take the pieces; here they are. Now, there is nothing to bear witness against you, Karsten. Now you are safe; be happy too—if you can.

Ber. [*profoundly moved*]. Lona, why did you not do this before! It is too late now; my whole life is ruined now; I cannot live after to-day.

Lona. What has happened?

Ber. Don't ask me. And yet I must live! I will live—for Olaf's sake. He shall restore all and atone for all——

Word is brought that Olaf has run away in the *Indian Girl*. Bernick staggers at the blow. He shouts again to Krap, in despair, that the ship must be stopped at any cost, that Olaf is on board. They try to reassure Bernick by telling him that the boy will be sent back with the pilot, but it is found that he left a note saying that he was going to stow away on board the ship until she was safely at sea.

Ber. I shall never see him again!

Rum. Oh, nonsense; a good stout ship, newly repaired——

Vigeland [*who has also come in*]. And in your own yard, too, Consul.

Ber. I shall never see him again, I tell you. I have

lost him, Lona; and—I see it now—he has never been really mine.

The procession is heard coming. Bernick declares he will see no one. The street is suddenly illuminated. On the house opposite is a large transparency with the inscription, "Long live Karsten Bernick, the Pillar of our Society."

Ber. [*shrinking back*]. Away with all this! I will not look at it! Out with it! Out with it!

Rummel tries to console him. He says it isn't as if the *Indian Girl* was one of those floating coffins that they hear about sometimes. Mrs. Bernick comes in with a shawl over her head, and Bernick at once begins to reproach her for not keeping any watch over the boy. But she has kept a close watch over Olaf, she found out his plan and got Aune to row her out to the ship.

Ber. Aune? What of him? Is the *Indian Girl* under sail again?

Mrs. B. No, that is just the thing——

Ber. Speak, speak!

Mrs. B. Aune was as terrified as I was; the search took some time; darkness came on, and the pilot made objections: so Aune ventured—in your name——

Ber. Well?

Mrs. B. To stop the ship till to-morrow.

Krap. H'm——

Ber. Oh, what unspeakable happiness!

The crowd comes, speeches are made, and Bernick addresses the people. He repudiates Dr. Rörlund's panegyric about himself, and confesses at once that he has often acted with a desire for gaining power and influence. Then he comes out squarely with the admission that he has bought up the property along the proposed railway line and offers to form a joint-stock company for the exploitation of these properties. Whoever will can have shares in it, he says.

Stopping the cheers, he says that his original intention was to keep it all for himself. This is not all. He will get clear of the lie that has gone near to poisoning every fibre of his being; fifteen years ago it was he who sinned, not Johan Tönnesen.

Ber. Yes, my fellow citizens, I was guilty, and he fled.

The false and vile rumors which were afterward current, it is now in no human power to disprove. But of this I cannot complain. Fifteen years ago I swung myself aloft by aid of these rumors; whether I am now to fall with them is for you to decide.

He asks his townspeople to go home and look into themselves and consider whether he has gained or lost by speaking out.

When the crowd have gone Lona tells Bernick that as soon as she learned from Johan about the lie she swore to herself that Bernick, the hero of her youth, should stand free and true. Now it has come to pass. Bernick asks her not to leave them again.

Lona. No; how could I think of going away and leaving you young people, just beginning life? Am I not your foster-mother? You and I, Martha, we are the two old aunts—— What are you looking at?

Mar. How the sky is clearing; how it grows light over the sea. The *Palm Tree* has fortune with it——

Lona. And happiness on board.

Ber. And we—we have a long, earnest day of work before us; I most of all. But let it come! Gather close around me, you true and faithful women. I have learnt this, in these days: it is you women who are the pillars of society.

Lona. Then you have learnt a poor wisdom, brother-in-law. [*Lays her hand firmly upon his shoulder.*] No, no; the spirits of Truth and Freedom—these are the Pillars of Society.

A DOLL'S HOUSE*

By Henrik Ibsen

First played in Copenhagen in December, 1879.

Argument: Nora Helmer, always so carefully protected, first by her father and then by her husband, from the necessity for considering any of the serious aspects of life that she never acquired any notion of personal responsibility, when confronted at last by a crisis in which she had to rely on herself solved the difficulty by the simple expedient of forgery. A blackmailer threatens to expose her and ruin her husband, and she loses faith in her moral right and ability to bring up her children. Will Nora dare confess to her husband, or will she again resort to the simple expedient by ending her life?

The parlor of the Helmers' apartment in Christiania is comfortably and tastefully but not expensively furnished. Mrs. Helmer comes in with several parcels, and a porter brings in a Christmas tree which he gives to the maid-servant. Mrs. Helmer dismisses the man with twice the pay he asks and gleefully takes off her outdoor things. She eats one or two macaroons from a bag which she has brought with her, and then tiptoes to her husband's door and listens.

Nora. Yes; he is at home. [*She begins humming gayly.*]

Helmer [*in his room*]. Is that my lark twittering there?

Nora [*busy opening some of her parcels*]. Yes, it is.

Hel. Is the squirrel frisking around?

Nora. Yes!

Hel. When did the squirrel get home?

Nora. Just this minute. [*Hides the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.*] Come here, Torvald, and see what I've been buying.

*Published by Charles Scribners' Sons, New York.

Hel. Don't interrupt me. [*A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.*] Buying, did you say? What! All that? Has my little spendthrift been making the money fly again?

Nora. Why, Torvald, surely we can afford to launch out a little now. It's the first Christmas we haven't had to pinch.

Hel. Come, come; we can't afford to squander money.

Nora. Oh yes, Torvald, do let us squander a little, now—just the least little bit! You know you'll soon be earning heaps of money.

Hel. Yes, from New Year's Day. But there's a whole quarter before my first salary is due.

Nora. Never mind; we can borrow in the meantime.

Hel. Nora! [*He goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*] Still my little featherbrain! Supposing I borrowed a thousand crowns to-day, and you made ducks and drakes of them during Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a tile blew off the roof and knocked my brains out.

She puts her hand over his mouth and tells him not to talk so horridly. But if anything so dreadful happened it would be all the same to her whether she was in debt or not; she wouldn't mind the creditors; they are only strangers. He takes occasion to reiterate his principles. There must be no debt and no borrowing, for home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt.

She shows him what she has bought for the children: a suit for Ivar and a little sword, a horse and a trumpet for Bob, and a doll and a cradle for Emmy. There are also things for the servants. Nora is reluctant to admit that she wants anything for herself, but finally asks for money. He says she is a sweet little lark, but that no one would suppose how much it costs a man to keep such a little bird as she. He laughs when she says she saves as much as she can, for that is precisely nothing.

Helmer suspects that Nora has been eating sweets, which he disapproves of very much as they are so bad for her, but she denies it stoutly.

Dr. Rank comes to see Helmer and goes into his study with him. At the same time Mrs. Linden, an old friend

of Nora's, comes to see her. They have not met for nine or ten years, and for three years Mrs. Linden has been a widow. Nora tells her friend of the great stroke of fortune they have had; Helmer has just been made manager of the Joint Stock Bank. Now they will have plenty of money, and Nora is very lighthearted and happy.

Mrs. Linden remembers that Nora always used to be a shocking little spendthrift, as she puts it, but Nora says she is not quite so bad as her friends think. Her husband and she had a very hard time when they were first married; Helmer overworked and fell dangerously ill, the doctors declared he must go to the South, and that cost a frightful amount of money, four thousand eight hundred crowns, for they had to spend a year in Italy before Helmer's health was restored. Nora says she got the money from her father, who died just at that time.

Mrs. Linden has had a hard time, too. She had a helpless mother and two younger brothers to care for, and so she married a man she did not love. When he died she was left with nothing, but now her mother is no longer living and the boys can take care of themselves.

Mrs. Linden. My dear Nora, don't you be vexed with me. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. You have no one to work for, yet you have to be always on the strain. You must live; and you become so selfish. When I heard of the happy change in your fortunes—can you believe it?—I was glad for my own sake more than for yours.

Nora. How do you mean? Ah, I see! You think Torvald can perhaps do something for you. And so he shall, Christina. Just you leave it all to me. I shall lead up to it beautifully!—I shall think of some delightful plan to put him in a good humor! Oh, I should so love to help you.

Mrs. L. How good of you, Nora, to stand by me so warmly! Doubly good in you who know so little of the troubles and burdens of life.

The unconscious irony of this remark leads Nora to tell how she came by the money that was needed to save Torvald's life. She did not get it from her father, as Torvald and every one supposes. She borrowed it, and ever since she has had to pay back instalments as well as inter-

est. She has pinched and saved, and done work that her husband never knew of, but now she is lighthearted, for she is free at last from anxiety. Torvald does not know even that the trip to Italy was taken on his own account, and Nora declares she never could tell him of the debt. Mrs. Linden is apparently inclined to think that Nora borrowed the money from some man who was in love with her.

Nils Krogstad, who holds a position in the bank, comes to see Helmer. When he enters the room Mrs. Linden gives a start and turns away to the window. Nora goes up to the man anxiously and inquires in a low voice what he wants of her husband. Krogstad says that it is merely a matter of business and goes into the study. Dr. Rank comes out and talks to the ladies.

The doctor refers to Krogstad as a moral incurable. He says that Krogstad goes around searching for rottenness, and when he finds a good case squeezes all the blackmail out of it that it will yield. Nora is suddenly amused at something, and asks Dr. Rank if her husband has power over every one employed in the bank. It strikes her that it is funny to think of. She is feeling very happy, and there is only one thing in the world that she really wants. She would like to say a little swear word in her husband's presence if she only dared.

As soon as Krogstad has gone Helmer comes into the parlor. Nora asks him for a position for Mrs. Linden and he thinks it can be provided. Mrs. Linden, Helmer, and Dr. Rank go and the children come in. Nora is playing with them when Krogstad returns. She starts violently at seeing him. He explains that he found the door ajar.

Krogstad has a few words to say to Mrs. Helmer. It will depend upon herself whether she has a merry Christmas. To do so she must assure him of his position in the bank. If need be he will fight as if for his life to keep it. He is a widower and has sons who are growing up. For their sake he is determined to recover his character. The place in the bank was the first step; and now her husband wants to kick him back into the gutter.

Nora declares that she hasn't the least power to help him. He replies that he will compel her. She fears that

he means to tell her husband that she borrowed money from him, but if he does, she says, her husband will pay him off at once and they will have nothing further to do with him. It appears she cannot dispose of the matter so easily. She gave Krogstad a note of hand for the money with which he supplied her, and the note made her father security for the debt. Krogstad recalls a remarkable fact about that paper. Her father signed it three days after his death.

Unaware that she is making a dangerous admission, Nora replies defiantly that she signed her father's name herself. Krogstad then informs her that she did the very thing that made him an outcast from society. She cannot believe that the law will not take her motives into consideration. She thinks it must be allowable to spare a dying father trouble and anxiety, and to save a husband's life. Krogstad's only reply is that if he is flung back into the gutter again, she shall keep him company.

A little later, when Helmer returns, Nora asks him if it was through anything so very dreadful that Krogstad got into trouble. His manner in answering that it was through forgery leaves her in no doubt as to his view of the matter. But Helmer explains that he would not be so hard-hearted as to condemn a man absolutely for a single fault. Krogstad did not retrieve his character by owning his crime and taking his punishment. The word startles Nora. He evaded the law by tricks and subterfuges. That is what has morally ruined him; he had worn a mask toward those who stand nearest to him—toward his wife and children. The effect on the children is the most terrible part of it.

Hel. Because in such an atmosphere of lies home life is poisoned and contaminated in every fibre. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil.

Nora [*closer behind him*]. Are you sure of that?

Hel. As a lawyer, my dear, I have seen it often enough. Nearly all cases of early corruption may be traced to lying mothers.

Nora. Why—mothers?

Hel. It generally comes from the mother's side; but of course the father's influence may act in the same way. Every lawyer knows it too well. And here has this Krog-

stad been poisoning his own children for years past by a life of lies and hypocrisy—that is why I call him morally ruined. [*Holds out both hands to her.*] So my sweet little Nora must promise not to plead his cause. Shake hands upon it. Come, come, what's this? Give me your hand. That's right. Then it's a bargain. I assure you it would have been impossible for me to work with him. It gives me a positive sense of physical discomfort to come in contact with such people.

Nora draws her hand away, and moves to the other side of the Christmas tree. Helmer goes into his study, and the nurse comes to ask if she may bring in the children.

Nora. No, no, no; don't let them come to me! Keep them with you, Anna.

Anna. Very well, ma'am. [*She shuts the door.*]

Nora [*pale with terror*]. Corrupt my children! [*Short pause. She throws back her head.*] It's not true! It can never, never be true!

Christmas day is far from merry for Nora. She has to prepare a costume for a fancy-dress ball, although she is little in the mood for it. She asks the nurse if she thinks that the children will get used to seeing her less in the future, and if they would forget their mother if she went away. Anna is quite startled at the suggestion, but she says that her daughter has never forgotten her although she was obliged to leave her when she was quite little.

Mrs. Linden offers to help Nora with the costume. It is to be the dress of a Neapolitan fisher girl. Torvald wishes Nora to dance the tarantella, which she learned at Capri. Mrs. Linden asks if Dr. Rank is always as depressed as he seemed the previous evening. Nora has heard that the feebleness of his constitution is due to the dissolute life led by his father. Dr. Rank has been Torvald's most intimate friend from his boyhood, and Nora says he is quite one of the family.

The notion that Dr. Rank is the rich admirer who lent Nora money has taken root in Mrs. Linden's mind, but Nora soon disabuses her of it, although she says Dr. Rank would undoubtedly have helped her if she had asked him. Helmer comes in just then and Mrs. Linden takes the dressmaking to the nursery. To Helmer's surprise, Nora re-

news her plea for Krogstad. Helmer has already written a letter dismissing him.

Nora. Call it back again, Torvald! There is still time. Oh, Torvald, call it back again! For my sake, for your own, for the children's sake! Do you hear, Torvald? Do it! You don't know what that letter may bring upon us all.

Hel. Too late.

Nora. Yes, too late.

Helmer does not fear the spite of such a wretched creature as Krogstad. He tells Nora to forget her foolish fancies and practise the tarantella with the tambourine. He will close the doors of his room and she can make as much noise as she pleases. He goes with his papers into his room. Nora is bewildered with terror. The hall bell rings.

Nora draws her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it. Dr. Rank stands outside. It is beginning to grow dark as Dr. Rank tells her what he has come to say. He is the most wretched of all of his patients. He has been auditing his life account and is bankrupt. Perhaps before a month is over, he says, he will lie rotting in the churchyard. When the break-up sets in he is going to send her his visiting card with a black cross on it; and then she will know that the final horror has begun.

Nora tells him not to talk in such an ugly way and tries to cheer him up. She says that death shall not separate him from Torvald and herself. He wishes that he could leave behind a token of his gratitude to them. She is about to confide in him her need of a great service of help and advice when he tells her of his love for her. And now she will not breathe a word of her trouble to him.

Again Krogstad comes, to make a final threat. Nora locks the door into the room where Dr. Rank has joined her husband. She tells Krogstad that she fought with her husband for him till the last. The only way in which he can be bought off, Krogstad says, is that which he has stipulated; Helmer must be told, for no amount of money that she might offer would get back her note.

Krogstad. I only want to keep it—to have it in my

possession. No outsider shall hear anything of it. So, if you have any desperate scheme in your head——

Nora. What if I have?

Krog. If you should think of leaving your husband and children——

Nora. What if I do?

Krog. Or if you should think of—something worse——

Nora. How do you know that?

Krog. Put it all out of your head.

Nora. How did you know what I had in mind?

Krog. Most of us think of that at first. I thought of it, too; but I hadn't the courage——

Nora [*tonelessly*]. Nor I.

Krog. [*relieved*]. No, one hasn't. You haven't the courage either, have you?

Nora. I haven't, I haven't.

Krog. Besides, it would be very foolish. Just one domestic storm, and it's all over. I have a letter in my pocket for your husband.

The demand that Krogstad makes now is that he shall have a higher position than before in the bank, and that Helmer shall create it for him. He knows that Helmer will not have the courage to refuse, once he knows the alternative.

Krog. He will do it; I know him—he won't dare to show fight! And when he and I are together there, you shall soon see! Before a year is out I shall be the manager's right hand. It won't be Torvald Helmer, but Nils Krogstad, that manages the Joint Stock Bank.

Nora. That shall never be.

Krog. Perhaps you will——?

Nora. Now I have the courage for it.

Krog. Oh, you don't frighten me! A sensitive, petted creature like you——

Nora. You shall see, you shall see!

Krog. Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, black water? And next spring to come up again, ugly, hairless, unrecognizable——

Nora. You can't terrify me.

Krog. Nor you me. People don't do that sort of thing, Mrs. Helmer. And, after all, what would be the use of it? I have your husband in my pocket, all the same.

MRS. FISKE AS NORA

Helmer. Come, come, come, don't look like a scared dove. It is all nothing—fancy. Now you must play the tarantella through and practise with the tambourine

Nora. Afterward? When I am no longer——?

Krog. You forget your reputation remains in my hands! [NORA *stands speechless and looks at him.*] Well, now you are prepared. Do nothing foolish. As soon as Helmer has received my letter I shall expect to hear from him. And remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me back again into such paths. That I will never forgive him. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer.

He goes out through the hall. Nora hurries to the door, opens it a little, and listens. She hears a letter fall into the box, and Krogstad's footsteps gradually receding down the stairs. She utters a suppressed shriek, rushes forward in the room and then back again, out into the hall, crying, "Torvald, Torvald—now we are lost!"

Mrs. Linden brings in the costume and Nora shows her the letter where it lies in the box, explaining that it is from Krogstad, who lent her the money. Mrs. Linden insists it is best that her husband should know all. Nora answers her wildly. She says that if anything should happen to her so that she could not be there, and some one else should try to take the blame for her, Mrs. Linden must bear witness that it is not true. Mrs. Linden promises to remember, but protests she doesn't understand at all.

Mrs. Linden says she will go straight to Krogstad and talk to him. Once he would have done anything for her. Now he must get his letter back unread. While Helmer knocks at the door of his room Mrs. Linden tells Nora that she must keep him occupied and somehow prevent him from opening his letters while she goes as quickly as she can to find the blackmailer.

Nora makes Helmer promise to devote his time to her and not do any work as she has forgotten how to dance the tarantella and he must teach it to her again, but he says he will first just take a look at the mail. At last she dissuades him. She snatches a tambourine and hastily drapes herself in a parti-colored shawl; then, with a bound, stands in the middle of the floor. Helmer plays and she dances, while Dr. Rank stands at the piano and looks on.

Hel. [*playing*]. Slower! Slower!

Nora. Can't do it slower!

Hel. Not so violently, Nora.

Nora. I must! I must!

Hel. [*stops*]. No, no, Nora—that will never do.

Nora [*laughs and swings her tambourine*]. Didn't I tell you so!

Rank. Let me play for her.

Dr. Rank sits down to the piano and plays. Nora dances more and more wildly. Helmer stands by the stove and addresses frequent corrections to her. She seems not to hear. Her hair breaks loose and falls over her shoulders. Mrs. Linden enters and stands spellbound in the doorway.

Nora [*dancing*]. We're having such fun here, Christina!

Hel. Why, Nora dear, you're dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

Nora. So it is.

Helmer asks Dr. Rank to stop playing, and Nora tells him that he must promise to practise with her up to the last moment. He mustn't open a single letter or even look in the letter box.

Hel. Ah, you're still afraid of that man——

Nora. Oh, yes, yes, I am.

Hel. Nora, I can see it in your face—there's a letter from him in the box.

Nora. I don't know, I believe so. But you're not to read anything now; nothing ugly must come between us until all is over.

Rank [*softly, to* HELMER]. You mustn't contradict her.

Hel. [*putting his arm around her*]. The child shall have her own way. But to-morrow night, when the dance is over——

Nora. Then you shall be free.

Dinner is announced. Dr. Rank's suspicions are aroused, but Helmer assures him that there is nothing the matter but Nora's babyish anxiety. Nora stays behind with Mrs. Linden to arrange her hair.

Mrs. L. He's gone out of town.

Nora. I saw it in your face.

Mrs. L. He comes back to-morrow evening. I left a note for him.

Nora. You shouldn't have done that. Things must take their course. After all there's something glorious in waiting for the miracle.

Mrs. L. What is it you're waiting for?

Nora. Oh, you can't understand. Go to them in the dining-room; I shall come in a moment.

Mrs. Linden goes into the dining-room. Nora stands for a moment as though collecting her thoughts· then looks at her watch.

Nora. Five. Seven hours till midnight. Then twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

Helmer appears at the door.

Hel. What has become of my little lark?

Nora [*runs to him with open arms*]. Here she is!

The next night Mrs. Linden is sitting in the Helmers' parlor alone, absently turning the pages of a book. She tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention. She frequently listens and looks anxiously toward the hall door. Dance music is heard from the floor above where the fancy ball is going on. Finally Krogstad arrives. He has found her note and wants to know what it means. Have they two anything to say to each other? He thinks of her only as a heartless woman who threw him over when a better match offered.

Since she had to break with him, was it not best, she asks, to put an end to all he felt for her. She admits that she has often asked herself whether she had the right to cast him off, but she had a helpless mother and two little brothers and they could not wait for him as his prospects then stood.

Krog. When I had lost you I seemed to have no firm ground left under my feet. Look at me now. I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a spar.

Mrs. L. Rescue may be at hand.

Krog. It was at hand; but then you came and stood in the way.

She did not know that she was replacing him in the bank. He asks if now she knows it she does not mean to give way. She says that would not help him, and then suddenly asks if they two shipwrecked people mightn't join hands. He is astounded and incredulous, but she says she is alone in the world and wants somebody to

work for. He cannot believe in all that; he takes it for a woman's romantic craving for self-sacrifice.

Krog. And do you know what people say of me?

Mrs. L. Did you not say just now that with me you could have been another man?

Krog. I am sure of it.

Mrs. L. Is it too late?

Krog. Christina, do you know what you are doing?

Mrs. L. I need some one to be a mother to, and your children need a mother. You need me, and I—I need you. Nils, I believe in your better self. With you I fear nothing.

At last she calls his attention to the dancing overhead to remind him that the Helmers will soon be coming downstairs. He is seized with the sudden fear that she will learn what he has been doing and will throw him over again, but she knows already.

Krog. [*looking to her searchingly*]. Is that what it all means? You want to save your friend at any price. Say it out—is that your idea?

Mrs. L. Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for the sake of others does not do so again.

Krog. I shall demand my letter back again.

Mrs. L. No, no.

Krog. Yes, of course. I shall wait till Helmer comes; I shall tell him to give it back to me—that it's only about my dismissal—that I don't want it read——

Mrs. L. No, Nils, you must not recall the letter.

Krog. But tell me, wasn't that just why you got me to come here?

Mrs. L. Yes, in my first alarm. But a day has passed since then, and in that day I have seen incredible things in this house. Helmer must know everything; there must be an end to this unhappy secret. These two must come to a full understanding. They must have done with all these shifts and subterfuges.

It is almost by main strength that Helmer drags his wife away from the ball, and she does not give up the struggle to return to it even after he has got her down to their parlor. He leads her gently into the room in spite of her resistance. He calls her will obstinacy. He tells Mrs. Linden that the tarantella was a great success. As soon as he goes into his room for a moment Mrs. Linden insists that

Nora must tell him everything, but Nora is very positive in her refusal. Then, Mrs. Linden says, the letter will accomplish the purpose.

When Mrs. Linden has gone Helmer declares she is a terrible bore. He wanted to be alone with Nora. That was the reason why he hurried her away from the ball. She does not wish to be wooed. Then, to Helmer's annoyance, Dr. Rank looks in. The doctor observes that he has contrived to get down an incredible amount of champagne. Nora fails to gather from his innuendo that he has come to say his last good-bye. She asks him how they shall dress for the next masquerade.

At the next masquerade, Dr. Rank replies, he will be invisible. Helmer finds this rather a comical idea. There is a big black hat which comes down all over you, Dr. Rank says, and then no one can see you. He asks for a cigar and goes. Helmer says it does seem that Rank had been drinking a good deal. He goes out at last to the letter box and finds Dr. Rank's cards. There is a black cross on each over the name. Nora tells him what the cards mean and then sends him into his room to read his mail.

Nora [*with wild eyes, gropes about her, seizes* HELMER'S *domino, throws it round her, and whispers quickly, hoarsely, and brokenly*]. Never to see him again. Never, never, never. [*Throws her shawl over her head.*] Never to see the children again. Never, never. Oh that black, icy water! Oh, that bottomless——! If it were only over! Now he has it; he's reading it. Oh, no, no, no, not yet. Torvald, good-bye——! Good-bye, my little ones——!

She is rushing out by the hall; at the same moment Helmer flings his door open, and stands there with an open letter in his hand.

Hel. Nora!

Nora [*shrieks*]. Ah——!

Hel. What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

Nora. Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me pass'

Hel. [*holds her back*]. Where do you want to go?

Nora [*tries to break away from him*]. You shall not save me, Torvald.

Hel. [*falling back*]. True! Is what he writes true? No, no, it is impossible that this can be true.

Nora. It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

Hel. Pshaw—no silly evasions!

Nora [*a step nearer him*]. Torvald——!

Hel. Wretched woman—what have you done!

Nora. Let me go—you shall not save me! You shall not take my guilt upon yourself!

Hel. I don't want any melodramatic airs. [*Locks the outer door.*] Here you shall stay and give an account of yourself. Do you understand what you have done? Answer! Do you understand it?

Nora [*looks at him fixedly, and says with a stiffening expression*]. Yes; now I begin fully to understand it.

Hel. [*walking up and down*]. Oh! what an awful awakening! During all these eight years—she who was my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal. Oh, the unfathomable hideousness of it all! Ugh! Ugh!

[NORA *says nothing, and continues to look fixedly at him.*]

Hel. I ought to have known how it would be. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle—be silent!—all your father's want of principle you have inherited—no religion, no morality, no sense of duty. How I am punished for screening him! I did it for your sake; and you reward me like this.

Nora. Yes—like this.

Hel. You have destroyed my whole happiness. You have ruined my future. Oh, it's frightful to think of! I am in the power of a scoundrel; he can do whatever he pleases with me, demand whatever he chooses; he can domineer over me as much as he likes, and I must submit. And all this disaster and ruin is brought upon me by an unprincipled woman!

Nora. When I am out of the world you will be free.

Hel. Oh, no fine phrases. Your father, too, was always ready with them. What good would it do me if you were "out of the world," as you say? No good whatever! He can publish the story all the same; I might even be suspected of collusion. People will think I was at the bottom of it all and egged you on. And for all this I have you to thank—you whom I have done nothing but pet

and spoil during our whole married life. Do you understand now what you have done to me?

The thing is so incredible, he says, that he can't grasp it; but they must come to an understanding. He orders her to take her shawl off. This matter must be hushed up, cost what it may. Then, he says, of course, she will continue to live there but the children cannot be left in her care. He dares not trust them to her. And he has loved her so tenderly! But that must be a thing of the past. The doorbell suddenly rings. With a start he tells Nora to hide herself.

A messenger has brought a letter for Nora. Helmer snatches it. He sees it is from Krogstad and says she shall not have it. Tearing it open he reads a few lines and utters a cry of joy.

Hel. Nora!—Oh! I must read it again.—Yes, yes, it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

Nora. And I?

Hel. You, too, of course; we are both saved, both of us. Look here—he sends you back your promissory note. He writes that he regrets and apologizes, that a happy turn in his life—— Oh, what does it matter what he writes. We are saved, Nora!

He tears the note and Krogstad's letters in pieces, throws them in the fire and watches them burn. Finally it occurs to him that Nora must have been through a bad time. She says yes, she has fought a hard fight for the last three days. He thinks she still seems unable to grasp the fact that the horror is all over. He has forgiven her. He knows that everything she did was for love of him; she loved him as a wife should love her husband. But she mustn't think he loves her less because she cannot do without guidance. No, no. Her very womanly helplessness makes her doubly dear in his eyes. She mustn't think of the hard things he said in the first moment of terror. She goes into the next room to take off her costume and he keeps on talking to her, more voluble in his relief than he was in fright.

When Nora comes back he is surprised to see that she has on street dress. Her explanation that it is because she will not sleep that night takes his breath away. She tells him to sit down; she has something to say to him. He

is suddenly alarmed at her manner and declares that he cannot understand her. That is just it, she replies, and she has never understood him—till to-night. They have been married eight years and have never talked together seriously, never set themselves seriously to get to the bottom of anything.

The suggestion that she has anything to do with serious things surprises him. She declares that he has always done her a great injustice, and that her father did her the same injustice before. Torvald, she says, has never loved her, but only thought it amusing to be in love with her.

Hel. Why, Nora, what a thing to say!

Nora. Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with father he used to tell me all his opinions, and I held the same opinions. If I had others I said nothing about them because he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his doll-child, and played with me as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house——

Hel. What an expression to use about our marriage!

Nora [*undisturbed*]. I mean I passed from father's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your taste; and I got the same tastes as you; or I pretended to—I don't know which—both ways, perhaps; sometimes one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it now, I seem to have been living here like a beggar, from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It is your fault that my life has come to nothing.

Hel. Why, Nora, how unreasonable and ungrateful you are! Have you not been happy here?

Nora. No, never. I thought I was; but I never was.

Hel. Not—not happy!

Nora. No; only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our house has been nothing but a playroom. Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And the children, in their turn, have been my dolls. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as the children did when I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald.

Hel. There is some truth in what you say, exaggerated and overstrained though it be. But henceforth it shall

be different. Playtime is over; now comes the time for education.

Nora. Whose education? Mine, or the children's?

Hel. Both, my dear Nora.

Nora. Oh, Torvald, you are not the man to teach me to be a fit wife for you.

Hel. And you can say that?

Nora. And I—how have I prepared myself to educate the children?

Hel. Nora!

Nora. Did you not say yourself, a few minutes ago, you dared not trust them to me?

Hel. In the excitement of the moment! Why should you dwell upon that?

Nora. No—you were perfectly right. That problem is beyond me. There is another to be solved first—I must try to educate myself. You are not the man to help me in that. I must set about it alone. And that is why I am leaving you.

Hel. [*jumping up*]. What—do you mean to say——?

Nora. I must stand quite alone if I am ever to know myself and my surroundings; so I cannot stay with you.

Hel. Nora! Nora!

Nora. I am going at once. I daresay Christina will take me in for to-night——

Hel. You are mad! I shall not allow it! I forbid it!

Nora. It is of no use your forbidding me anything now. I shall take with me what belongs to me. From you I will accept nothing, either now or afterward.

She means to return to her home town and find work to do there. What the world may say she need not heed.

Hel. This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

Nora. What do you consider my holiest duties?

Hel. Do I need to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

Nora. I have other duties equally sacred.

Hel. Impossible! What duties do you mean?

Nora. My duties toward myself.

Hel. Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

Nora. That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are—or

at least that I should try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that they say so in books. But henceforth I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them.

It strikes Helmer as preposterous that so young a woman should take this stand, in spite of religion, conscience, and moral feelings.

Hel. You talk like a child. You don't understand the society in which you live.

Nora. No, I do not. But now I shall try to learn. I must make up my mind which is right—society or I.

Hel. Nora, you are ill; you are feverish; I almost think you are out of your senses.

Nora. I have never felt so much clearness and certainty as to-night.

Hel. You are clear and certain enough to forsake husband and children?

Nora. Yes, I am.

Hel. Then there is only one explanation possible.

Nora. What is that?

Hel. You no longer love me.

Nora. No; that is just it.

Hel. Nora! Can you say so!

Nora. Oh, I'm so sorry, Torvald; for you've always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I do not love you any longer.

He forfeited her love when the miracle did not happen, when he did not prove himself to be the man she imagined him. It never occurred to her for a minute that Torvald would think of submitting to Krogstad's conditions; she believed that Torvald would try to take the blame upon himself to shield her. He protests that that would not have been possible.

Nora. You mean I would never have accepted such a sacrifice? No, certainly not. But what would my assertions have been worth in opposition to yours?—That was the miracle that I hoped for and dreaded. And it was to hinder that that I wanted to die.

Hel. I would gladly work for you day and night, Nora —bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man sacrifices his honor, even for one he loves.

Nora. Millions of women have done so.

Hel. Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

Nora. Very likely. But you neither think nor talk like the man I can share my life with. When your terror was over—not for what threatened me, but for yourself—when there was nothing more to fear—then it seemed to you as though nothing had happened. I was your lark again, your doll, just as before—whom you would take twice as much care of in future, because she was so weak and fragile. [*Stands up.*] Torvald—in that moment it burst upon me that I had been living here these eight years with a strange man, and had borne him three children.—Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself to pieces!

At last Helmer sees the abyss that has opened between himself and his wife, yet he cannot grasp the thought of parting from her. She will not remain even till the next day, for, she says, she cannot spend the night in a strange man's house. She releases him from all duties toward her and gives him back his ring. The children and he will be often in her thoughts, she says, but he must not write to her and must send her nothing. She will take nothing from strangers.

Hel. Nora—can I never be more than a stranger to you?

Nora [*taking her travelling bag*]. Oh, Torvald, then the miracle of miracles would have to happen——

Hel. What is the miracle of miracles?

Nora. Both of us would have to change so that—— Oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in miracles.

Hel. But *I* will believe. Tell me! We must so change that——?

Nora. That communion between us shall be a marriage. Good-bye. [*She goes out by the hall door.*

Hel. [*sinks into a chair by the door with his face in his hands*]. Nora! Nora! [*He looks round and rises.*] Empty. She is gone. [*A hope springs up in him.*] Ah! The miracle of miracles——?

[*From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing.*]

THE GREAT GALEOTO*

By José Echégaray

First played in Madrid in 1881.

Argument: Don Julian has offered a home to Ernest, the son of a friend to whom he owed a debt of gratitude, and busybodies are soon imagining that the young man is in love with Don Julian's wife. Ernest challenges a slanderer to a duel, but Don Julian insists upon defending his wife's honor himself and is dangerously wounded. Does Don Julian retain his faith in his wife, or does the persistence of gossip at last force his wife into Ernest's arms?

For some time Ernest has been sitting at his desk striving to give definite form to an impelling idea which he has vaguely conceived. At moments an inward light illumines it; he sees a world of living passions. Then it is gone again. Don Julian, his friend and patron, returns from the opera, and the paper before him is still blank. The first difficulty the young author faces is how to present his chief character in a drama, and for this reason; the chief character is *Everybody*. There is no room for everybody on the stage. Don Julian suggests representing the community by a few symbolical persons.

This device would distort the idea because he would have to bring on the stage types whose guile is repellent and is the less natural in that their evil is without object. He would be accused of depicting a cruel and debased society, whereas his sole design is to prove that not even the most insignificant actions are in themselves insignificant or lost for good or evil. The idea impresses Don Julian as rather too philosophical. He advises Ernest to go shooting with him the next day and to kill a

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few partridges instead of characters. But Ernest is determined to write the play.

Don Julian's wife, Teodora, comes in, and Don Julian remarks that his brother, Don Severo, seemed to be suppressing a violent rage at the opera. She thought Mercedes, Don Severo's wife, very preoccupied, but says that their son, Pepito, chattered enough for both. He talked about everybody. Don Julian suggests him as a character for the play. Left by himself again, Ernest's eye falls upon a copy of Dante, lying open on the table at the episode of Francesca and Paolo. A character in the story suggests a name for his principal personage, "The Great Galeoto." He sets it down and begins to write feverishly.*

Teodora and Don Julian are looking at the sunset from a balcony opening off a drawing-room of their house in Madrid. She finds the happiness of their life like the radiance of the heavens. He is thoughtful, and she asks if there is any business annoyance on his mind. He assures her that such things never trouble him, otherwise he would not be one of the richest bankers in Spain. He was considering a debt of old date, to Don Juan of Acedo, Ernest's father, to whom in fact he owed his entire success.

When he heard that his good friend was dead and had left a son badly off, Don Julian lost no time in bringing the young man to his home, and now Ernest has lived there a year like one of themselves. But Don Julian is thinking of what he can do for Ernest's future. He fears that Ernest may feel the protection he is receiving to be a humiliation, and thinks it imperative that there should be an end to his present position.

At this very moment Ernest enters the room to tell Don Julian that he can no longer live upon alms. He has come to the conclusion that others, seeing him housed and fed there, are saying of him what he long has thought. In fact, he is sure that Don Severo, Dona Mercedes, and Pepito object to the situation. In that case, replies Don Julian, Don Severo is a fool, Mercedes an idle chatterer, and the lad a puppy.

Ernest. They only repeat what they hear.

*The end of the Prologue.

Don Julian. It is not true. This is false reasoning. Between gentlemen, when the intention is honorable, what can the opinion of the world really matter? The meaner it is, the loftier our disdain of it.

Ernest. It's nobly said, and is what all well-bred men feel. But I have been taught that gossip, whether inspired by malice or not, which is according to each one's natural tendency, begins in a lie and generally ends in the truth.

If Ernest really desires independence, Don Julian will make him his secretary, and later they shall be partners. He goes out, laughing at the surprise he has caused. The room has become quite dark and when Don Severo and Mercedes enter presently they do not see Ernest and Teodora on the balcony at first, but they hear him say that his whole life, a thousand lives, would not be enough to offer her in return for her kindness. His heart knows how to love, he declares, and it can beat to bursting under the sentiment.

Don Severo. Their eternal tricks—always together. I can stand no more of this. And their words? I mustn't put it off any longer.

Mercedes. True, Severo. Come away. It is certainly your duty, since everybody is talking.

Severo. Yes, I must open Julian's eyes—to-day, at once.

Mer. The fellow has impudence enough and to spare.

Severo. By all that's holy—so has she.

Mer. Poor girl! She's but a child. Leave her to me.

Teodora comes in from the balcony and rings for a lamp. Don Severo looking at Ernest closely thinks him flushed and that he can descry traces of tears. It is only children and lovers that weep, he mutters, as he goes to look for his brother. Mercedes asks Teodora to send Ernest out. She has something very serious to say. Don Severo is being constantly assailed with innuendos, she explains, and with the smiles, covert glances, and reproaches of his friends. He insists that there must be an end to the low gossip about Don Julian, Teodora, and Ernest. Mercedes accuses Teodora of making a laughing-stock of her husband.

Teodora [*impetuously, rising*]. Julian! what a false-

hood! What wretch could say so? Julian would strike him!

Mer. [*endeavoring to soothe her and make her sit down*]. He would need a good many hands, then; for, if report speak truly, he would have to strike the entire town.

Teo. But what does it all mean? What is the mystery, and what is this talk of the town?

Mer. So you're sorry?

Teo. I am sorry. But what is it?

Mer. You see, Teodora, you are quite a child. At your age one is so often thoughtless and light, and then such bitter tears are afterward shed. You still don't understand me?

Teo. No, what has such a case to do with me?

Mer. It is the story of a scoundrel and the story of a lady——

Teo. [*eagerly*]. Whose name——?

Mer. Her name——

Teo. Oh, what does it matter?

Teodora moves away from Mercedes who shifts her seat on the sofa to follow her. The double movement of repugnance and aloofness on Teodora's part and of insistence and protection on Mercedes', is very marked.

Mer. The man is a shabby-hearted betrayer, who, for one hour of pleasure, would thrust upon the woman a life of sorrow: the husband's dishonor, the ruin of a family, and she left shamed and condemned to social penitence in the world's disdain, and to keener punishment still at the whip of her own conscience.

Here Teodora, avoiding Mercedes, reaches the edge of the sofa, bows her head and covers her face with both hands. At last she understands.

Mer. [*aside*]. Poor little thing! She touches me. [*Aloud.*] This man is not worthy of you, Teodora.

Teo. But, madam, what is the drift of all this blind emotion? Do not imagine that my eyes are dimmed with fear or horror or tears. They burn with the flame of anger. To whom can such words be addressed? What man do you mean? Is it, perchance——?

Mer. Ernest.

Teo. Ah! [*Pause.*] And the woman I? Not so? [MERCEDES *nods and* TEODORA *rises again.*] Then listen

to me, though I may offend you. I know not who is the viler, the inventor of this tale or you who repeat it. Shame upon the meanness that formed the idea, and shame upon the villainy that spreads it! It is so abominable, so fatal, that I almost feel myself criminal because I cannot instantly reject the thought and forget it. Heavens! Could I suppose or credit such baseness? Because of his misfortunes I loved him. He was like a brother to me, and Julian was his providence. And he so noble and thorough a gentleman! [*Stands staring at* MERCEDES, *then turns away her face. Aside.*] How she inspects me! I scarcely like to say a good word for him to her. My God! I am compelled already to act a part.

Mer. Be calm, child.

Teo. [*raising her voice*]. Oh, what anguish! I feel cold and inconsolable. Stained in this way by public opinion! Oh, my dearest mother, and you, Julian, my heart's beloved. [*She falls sobbing into a chair on the left, and* MERCEDES *strives to console her.*]

Mer. I did not imagine—forgive me—don't cry. There, I didn't really believe it was serious. I knew your past exonerated you. But as the case stands, you must admit that out of every hundred a hundred would accuse you and Julian of excessive rashness, or say you had led the world to conclude the worst. You a girl of twenty, Julian a man of forty, and Ernest between you, with his head full of romantic thoughts. On the one hand, a husband given up to business, on the other a youth to dreams, every day bringing its opportunity, and you there, unoccupied, in the flush of romance. It was wrong for people to conclude the worst because they saw you walking with him, and saw him so often at the theatre with you. But, Teodora, in reason and justice I think that if the world was bent on seeing evil, you furnished the occasion. Permit me to point out to you that the fault which society most fiercely chastises, pursues most relentlessly and cruelly, and in every varied imaginable way, both in man and woman is—don't frown so, Teodora—is *temerity*.

Teo. [*turning to* MERCEDES *without having heard her*]. And you say that Julian——

Mer. Is the laughing-stock of the town, and you——

Teo. Oh, I! That's no matter. But Julian! Oh, oh, so good, so chivalrous! If he only knew——

Mer. He will know, for at this very moment Severo is telling him.

Teo. What?

Julian [*inside*]. That will do.

Teo. Oh, goodness!

Julian. Let me alone.

Teo. Come away, quickly.

Mer. [*rushing with* TEODORA *toward first door on the right*]. Yes, yes, quickly. What folly! [TEODORA *and* MERCEDES *go to the right.*]

Teo. [*stopping suddenly*]. But wherefore, since I am not guilty? Not only does miserable calumny stain us, but it degrades us. It is so steeped in evil, that, against all evidence, its very breath takes the bloom off our consciences. Why should an idle terror cast its mean influence over me?

At this moment Don Julian appears on the threshold of the first door on the right-hand side, and behind him stands Don Severo.

Teo. Julian!

Julian. Teodora! [*She runs over to him, and he folds her in a passionate embrace.*] Here in my arms, dearest. It is the home of your honor.

Don Julian will let the affair pass for this once, but any one who distresses Teodora with it again shall be forbidden his house. Don Severo still wishes to inform his brother as to common report, but Don Julian will not have the mire of the streets carried into his drawing-room. He will not even hear of Ernest's going away on a long voyage, which Ernest is desirous of taking. He has no intention, he declares, of subjecting his actions to the town's idle gossip.

As they go in to dinner Don Julian notices that Teodora is agitated and that there are tears in her eyes. He stays behind with Don Severo and asks him why Teodora and Ernest look back at them so. Don Severo says he is becoming reasonable at last, but Don Julian replies that he has caught the madness.

Don Julian and Don Severo have come to see Ernest in

the small, poorly furnished room which the young man is now occupying. While they are waiting Don Julian expresses regret for his own ungrateful behavior toward the son of his benefactor and for the false sentiment which took Ernest away. He wishes the world might have left them alone. What did it matter to the public, he asks, if, fulfilling a sacred duty, he treated Ernest as a son and Teodora treated him as a sister.

In his heart, however, Don Julian wishes what his lips deny, as he presently tells his brother. While he shows a frank front, he is watchful and worn with mistrust. This inward struggle, he says, is changing him to another man. Now his wife finds him always sad, always distant. He is not the man he was and no effort will ever make him so again. An ever-deepening shadow has fallen between him and his wife. He is wounded in his love, and she, by his hand, is wounded in her woman's dignity. Don Severo asks, if he sees his position so plainly, why he does not remedy it.

Julian. It's of no use. I know I am unjust to doubt her, worse still. I don't doubt her now. But who will say that I, losing little by little, and he, gaining as steadily, the lie of to-day will not to-morrow be truth? [*He seizes* DON SEVERO *by the arm and speaks with voluble earnestness and increasing bitterness.*] I—jealous, sombre, unjust, and hard; he—noble and generous, resigned and unalterably sweet-natured, with that halo of martyrdom which in the eyes of women sits so becomingly on the brow of a brave and handsome youth. Is it not clear that his is the better part, and that my loss is his gain? while I can do nothing to alter the injustice of it. You see it, too? And if the ignoble talk of the town should compel those two to treason, though they may now truthfully assert: "we are not lovers," the force of repetition of the word may eventually drive them to the fact.

Severo. If that's how you feel about it, Julian, I think the safest thing would be to let Ernest carry out his project.

Julian. That I've come to prevent.

Severo. Then you are insane. He purposes to go to Buenos Ayres. Nothing could be better. Let him go—in a sailing vessel, fresh wind to his sail, and good speed.

Julian. Do you wish me to show myself so miserably

ungrateful and jealous before Teodora? Don't you know, Severo, that a woman may despise a lover and love him still, but not so a husband? Contempt is his dishonor. You would not have my wife follow the unhappy exile across the ocean with sad regrets? And I, should I see the trace of a tear upon her cheek, the mere thought that it might be for Ernest would drive me to strangle her in my arms. [*Speaks with rancour and rage.*]

All he can do is to suffer, he says. It is for the world that conceived the drama solely by looking at them to unravel the knot.

Pepito also calls for Ernest. He supposes that his father and uncle know that Ernest is going to fight a duel that day and sail the next for Argentina. They had not heard of it, but Don Julian pretends that he has in order to draw out Pepito. The fact is that Ernest went into a café where he overheard the Viscount Nebreda utter a slander on Teodora and instantly knocked down the offender. The duel will be a matter of life and death, Pepito says, for Nebreda is a dangerous swordsman.

It is not until Don Julian sinks down in a chair, overcome by the dishonor, that Pepito sees what he has done. Don Julian vows he will kill Nebreda. He bids Pepito find out the place of the duel. He is glad that the calumny has at last taken palpable shape, human form, and that he may come face to face with it. He and Don Julian leave Pepito to await Ernest.

The opinion that Pepito had held all along was that it was folly to leave a resplendent creature like Teodora under the same roof with a handsome young man. He has no faith in such relations when the brotherhood is a fiction. The man who could be near Teodora and not fall in love with her, he thinks, must be a stone. An empty picture frame on the table suggests to him that Ernest is wearing Teodora's picture on his heart. He picks up the copy of Dante as Ernest enters the room.

Pepito. Here, where the book is open, I find something I can't guess, and you must explain it to me. Reading a love tale together to pass the time, we are told that Francesca and Paolo reached that part where the gallant author, proving himself no amateur in the business, sings the loves of Launcelot and Guinevere. The match fell

pat. The kiss in the book was repeated by the passionate youth on the girl's mouth. And at this point of the story, with rare skill and sublime truth, the Florentine poet tells us what happens. [*Points to the line.*] But this is what I do not understand. "*Galeoto*" *was the book they were reading, and they read no more.* They stopped reading? That's easy enough to understand. But this Galeoto, tell me where he comes in, and who was he? You ought to know, since he has given his name to the play that is to make you famous. Let me see. [*Takes up the MS. and examines it.*]

Ern. Galeoto was the go-between for the Queen and Launcelot, and in all loves the *third* may be truthfully nicknamed Galeoto, above all when we wish to suggest an ugly word without shocking the audience. [*He takes his manuscript from* PEPITO *and flings it upon the table.*] Each especial case, I have remarked, has its own especial go-between. Sometimes it is the entire social mass that is Galeoto. It then unconsciously exercises the office under the influence of a vice of quite another aspect, but so dexterously does it work against honor and modesty that no greater Galeoto can ever be found. Let a man and woman live happily, in tranquil and earnest fulfilment of their separate duties—nobody minds them, and they float along at ease. But God be praised, this is a state of things that does not last long in Madrid. One morning somebody takes the trouble to notice them, and from that moment, behold society engaged in the business, without aim or object, on the hunt for hidden frailty and impurity. Then it pronounces and judges, and there is no logic that can convince it, nor living man who can hope to persuade it, and the honestest has not a rag of honor left. And the terrible thing is, that while it begins in error, it generally ends in truth. The atmosphere is so dense, misery so envelops the pair, such is the press and torrent of slander, that they unconsciously seek one another, unite lovelessly, drift toward their fall, and adore each other until death. The word was the stumbling-stone of virtue, and made clear the way for shame—was Galeoto and—[*aside*]—stay! what mad thought inflames me!

Pep. [*aside*]. If that's the way he discourses to Teodora, heaven help poor Don Julian.

Pepito turns the conversation to the duel. Ernest is very cool. He says that if he kills Nebreda the world gains; if Nebreda kills him, he gains. They are to fight in a room upstairs. A servant enters to tell Ernest that some one has come to see him. It is a lady, heavily veiled. Ernest cannot imagine who it can be. Pepito withdraws discreetly and the visitor comes in. She is Teodora, who has heard that he is going to Argentina and has come to say good-bye. Ernest tells her that he cannot understand Julian's jealousy.

Teo. Poor fellow, he pays a heavy price for his savage distrust.

Ern. [*horrified to find he has been blaming* DON JULIAN *to* TEODORA]. What have I said? I don't accuse him—no —I meant—— [*He hastens to exculpate* DON JULIAN *and modify his former words.*] Anybody might feel the same, that is, if he were very much in love. In our earthly egoism, don't we doubt the very God in heaven? And the owner of a treasure jealousy watches it as gold, and cannot but fear for it. I, too, in his place would be full of doubt, —yes—even of my own brother. [*Speaks with increasing fervor, and again restrains himself, perceiving that he is on the brink of a peril he would avoid.* TEODORA *hears voices outside and rushes to door.*]

They think they recognize Julian's voice at the door but the sounds die away.

Teo. I have so much to say to you, Ernest, and the time has passed so quickly.

Ern. The time has flown!

Teo. I wanted——

Ern. Teodora, pray forgive me—but is it prudent? If any one came in—and, indeed, I fear some one will.

Teo. That is why I came—to prevent it.

Ern. So that——?

Teo. I know everything, and I am stricken with horror at the thought that blood should be shed on my account. My head is on fire, my heart is bursting. [*Strikes her breast.*]

Ern. It is the affront that burns and shames you until my hand has struck at Nebreda's life. He wanted mud! Well, let him have it stained with blood.

Teo. You would kill him?

Ern. Certainly. [*Represses* TEODORA'S *movement of supplication.*] You can dispose of me in all else but this one thing. Do not ask me to feel compassion for a man whose insult I remember.

Teodora says that only her husband has a right to defend her, but he replies that every honorable man has a right to defend a lady. He may not even know her. It is enough to hear her insulted. She thinks that it would leave Julian humiliated for Ernest to take the quarrel upon himself.

Teo. When the world hears of the affront, and learns that it was not my husband who avenged me, and above all—[*drops her eyes ashamed*]—that it was you who took his place—have we not a new scandal then topping the old?

Ern. [*convinced but protests*]. If one had always to think what people will say, by Heaven! there would be no manner or means of living then!

Teo. It is so, nevertheless.

Ern. Just so. 'Tis horrible.

Teo. Then yield.

Ern. Impossible.

Teo. I beseech you.

Ern. No. Looking into the matter, as nobody can know what will happen, it is better that I should face Nebreda. For, after all, if the fellow lack a sense of honor, he can use a sword.

Teo. [*wounded and humiliated in the protection* ERNEST *seems to offer* DON JULIAN]. My husband is not lacking in courage.

Ern. Fatality again! Either I have expressed myself ill or you do not understand me. I know his worth. But when a desperate injury lies between men of courage, who knows what may happen, which of them may fall, and which may kill? And if this man's sword must strike Don Julian or Ernest, can you doubt which it ought to be? [*Questions her with sad sincerity.*]

Teo. [*in anguish*]. You!—oh, no—not that, either.

Ern. Why? If it is my fate? Nobody loses by my death, and I lose still less.

Teo. For Heaven's sake, do not say that! [*Barely able to repress her sobs.*]

Ern. What do I leave behind me? Neither friendship nor strong love. What woman is there to follow my corpse shedding a lover's tears?

Teo. Last night I prayed for you—and you say that nobody—— I could not bear you to die! [*Vehemently.*]

Ern. Ah, we pray for any one; we only weep for one. [*With passion.*]

Teo. [*startled*]. Ernest!

Ern. [*terrified by his own words*]. What!

Teo. [*moving farther away*]. Nothing.

Ern. [*also moving away and looking nervously down*]. I told you a little while ago I was half mad. Do not heed me. [*Pause. Both remain silent and pensive, at some distance, not looking at each other.*]

Teo. [*starting and glancing anxiously down the stage*]. Again!

Ern. [*following her movement*]. Somebody has come.

Teo. They are trying to get in.

Ern. [*listening*]. There can be no doubt of it. There, Teodora! [*Points to the bedroom door.*]

Teo. My honor is my shield.

Ern. But it is not your husband.

Teo. Not Julian?

Ern. [*leading her to the door*]. No.

Teo. I hoped—— [*Detains him with an air of supplication.*] Will you give up this duel?

Ern. Give it up? When I've struck him!

Teo. I didn't know that. [*Despairingly, but understands that nothing can be done.*] Then fly!

Ern. I fly!

Teo. For my sake, for his sake—for God's sake!

Ern. [*despairingly*]. You must loathe me to propose such a thing to me. Never!

Teo. One word only. Are they coming for you now?

Ern. It is not yet time.

Teo. Swear it to me.

Ern. Yes, Teodora. And you—say you don't hate me.

Teo. Never.

Pep. [*outside*]. Nothing. I must see him.

Ern. Quickly.

Teo. Yes. [*Hides in the bedroom.*]

Pepito enters excitedly without his hat, and says that a

great misfortune has happened. Don Julian heard of the duel and has himself fought with Nebreda.

Ern. Go on——

Pep. [*going to the door*]. They're coming, I believe.

Ern. Who?

Pep. They—they're carrying Don Julian.

Ern. You terrify me. Explain at once. [*Catches his arm violently, and drags him forward.*]

Pep. He compelled him to fight. There was no way out of it. The viscount cried: "Very well, between us two." It was settled it should take place here. Don Julian came upstairs. Your servant sent him away, protesting you were engaged with a lady, and swearing nobody could enter.

Ern. And then?

Pep. Don Julian went downstairs muttering "better so. I have the day's work for myself." And he, my father, Nebreda, and the seconds came back together, and went upstairs.

Ern. They fought?

Pep. Furiously, as men fight when their intent is deadly and their enemy's heart is within reach of the sword's point.

Ern. And Don Julian! No—it must be a lie.

Pep. Here they are.

Ern. Silence. Tell me who it is, but speak softly.

Pep. There.

Enter DON JULIAN, DON SEVERO, *and* RUEDA. *The two men support* DON JULIAN, *who is badly wounded.*

Ern. Heaven preserve us! Don Julian! my friend, my father, my benefactor! [*Hurries excitedly toward him, and speaks brokenly.*]

Julian [*weakly*]. Ernest!

Ern. Oh, wretched I!

Severo. Quick, come away.

Ern. Father!

Severo. He is fainting with pain.

Ern. For my sake!

Julian. It is not so.

Ern. Through me—pardon! [*Takes* DON JULIAN'S *hand, bends on one knee before him.*]

Julian. No need to ask it, lad. You did your duty, and I did mine.

Severo. A couch. [*Loosens his hold of* DON JULIAN, *and* PEPITO *takes his place.*]

Pep. [*pointing to the bedroom*]. Let us carry him in there.

Ern. [*shouting terribly*]. Nebreda!

Severo. Let there be an end to folly. Is it your intention to kill him outright?

Ern. [*with frenzy*]. Folly, oh, we'll see. I have two to avenge now. It is my right. [*Rushes away.*]

Severo [*moving to the right*]. We'll take him into your room and lay him on the bed. [ERNEST *wheels round in terror.*]

Ern. Where?

Severo. In here.

Pep. Yes.

Ern. No. [*Strides back, and stands before the door. The group are on the point of lifting* DON JULIAN, *desist, and stare at* ERNEST *in indignant surprise.*]

Severo. You forbid it?

Pep. Are you mad?

Severo. Back! Can't you see he is dying?

Julian. What is it? He doesn't wish it? [*Raises himself and looks at* ERNEST *in distrust and fear.*]

Rueda. I don't understand it.

Pep. Nor I.

Ern. He is dying—and implores me—and doubts me—father!

Severo. Come, we must. [*Pushes open the door above* ERNEST'S *shoulder.* TEODORA *is discovered.*]

Ern. My God!

Severo and Pepito. She!

Rueda. A woman!

Teo. [*coming forward to her husband and embracing him*]. Julian!

Julian. Who is it? [*Pushes her away to stare at her, drags himself to his feet with a violent effort, and shakes himself free of all aid.*] Teodora! [*Falls senseless to the ground.*]

It is night. A lamp is burning in a drawing-room in Don Julian's house, connecting with the apartments where he now lies. His life hangs in the balance, but dangerous

as it was for him to be moved, he insisted upon being taken away from Ernest's rooms. Pepito is in the drawing-room, and his mother comes in to ask for news from the sick-room.

Pep. He suffers greatly, but says nothing. Sometimes he calls out "Teodora" in a low, harsh voice, and sometimes "Ernest"; and then he tugs violently at the sheets, and lies quiet again as a statue, staring vacantly into space. Now his brow is bathed in the cold sweat of death, and then fever seizes him. He sits up in bed, listens attentively, and shouts that *he* and *she* are waiting for him. He tries to jump out of bed to rush at them, and all my father's entreaties and commands barely suffice to restrain him or soothe him. There's no quieting him. Anger races hot through his veins and thought is a flame. It is shocking, mother, to see the bitter way his lips contract, and how his fingers close in a vise, with head all wild, and pupils dilated as though they drank in with yearning and despair every shadow that floats around the chamber.

Mer. How does your father bear it?

Pep. He groans and breathes of vengeance. He, too, mutters the names of Teodora and Ernest. I hope to God he will not meet either, for, if he should, small chance there is of restraining his fury.

Mercedes regards Teodora as hardly to be blamed for her part, considering her youth, but holds Ernest culpable. Accordingly when a servant informs them that Ernest is there they are astonished at his presumption. Pepito means to give him his dismissal, but there is something which he wishes to learn first, and that is if it is true that Ernest has met the viscount.

When Don Julian was brought into Ernest's rooms Ernest rushed out, overtook Nebreda and forced him to come back with his seconds. Then, in a furious assault, Ernest drove his rapier through Nebreda's body. Ernest begs piteously to be allowed to say a word to Don Julian. Mercedes denies him on the ground that Don Julian is wounded mortally, and that it would be worse for him if Ernest went near him. She commands Ernest to leave the house at once, but he refuses to do so. He has come solely to learn if there is any hope and pleads with Mer-

cedes to give him a word of consolation. She replies at last that Don Julian is better.

Ernest devoutly beseeches God for Don Julian's recovery and the restoration of his happiness, and that Don Julian may forgive him and embrace him once more. He falls into an armchair, shaken with sobs. Mercedes and Pepito, fearing the consequences if Don Severo should find Ernest there, implore him to come to his senses, put an end to his lamentations, and leave the house. He goes on to repeat to them what is being said in the town.

Some relate that Don Julian found Teodora in his rooms, and that he attacked and slew Don Julian on the spot. Others say that they fought fairly. And others again tell that Don Julian was the antagonist of the viscount because Ernest was afraid or was lingering in the arms of Teodora. Seek the vilest, the blackest, he says, cast it on the wind, and you will have the tale, and may see what reputation remains for an innocent woman and two honest men.

Mer. It is sad, I admit; but perhaps public opinion is not altogether to blame.

Pep. Teodora did go to your rooms—she was there——

Ern. To prevent the duel with Nebreda.

Pep. Then why did she hide herself?

Ern. Because we feared her presence would be misconstrued.

Pep. The explanation is easy and simple. The difficult thing, Ernest, is to get us to believe it, for there is another still more easy and simple.

Ern. Which dishonors more, and that's the beauty of it.

Pep. Well, at least, admit that Teodora was giddy, if not really culpable.

Ern. Guilt is prudent and cautious. On the other hand, how imprudent is innocence!

If that rule holds good, Pepito replies, the worst of men is a saint. When Ernest asks if, having killed Nebreda for a lie, what he would do to himself should guilt threaten to give the color of truth to the gossip, they think he is confessing. Once again he refuses to go, saying it would drive him crazy to spend the night at a distance from the sickroom. They hear some one coming and are in terror lest it be Don Severo, but it is Teodora. Ernest will not

see her. He leaves the room and Mercedes sends out Pepito.

Teodora enters timidly and stands near Don Julian's door, listening anxiously, and muffling her sobs in her handkerchief. Mercedes reassures her, saying that she thinks Don Julian will recover, and draws her affectionately away. She says she has faith in Teodora's good sense and can measure her remorse by her tears and her anxiety. Teodora sits down with a satisfied air. She has cried and raved, thinking of Julian's plight, the scandal, the violent quarrel and bloodshed, and the possibility of Ernest's dying for her sake.

Mer. [*dryly*]. I think your fear for that fellow's life altogether superfluous.

Teo. Why? with so skilled an antagonist! You have seen it—Julian——

Mer. Julian has been avenged. The man who killed him no longer lives, so that you have been wasting your fears and your tears. [*With deliberate hardness.*]

Teo. [*eagerly*]. It was Ernest——

Mer. Yes, Ernest.

Teo. He met the viscount?

Mer. Face to face.

Teo. [*unable to restrain herself*]. How noble and brave!

Mer. Teodora!

Teo. What do you mean? Tell me.

Mer. [*sternly*]. I can read your thought.

Teo. My thought?

Mer. Yes.

Teo. Which?

Mer. You know very well.

Teo. Have I no right to be glad because Julian is avenged? Is that an impulse I could be expected to repress?

Mer. That was not your feeling.

Teo. You know so much more about it than I do!

Admiration is not far from love, Mercedes says pointedly, but is its beginning. Teodora declares that she would give her last drop of blood to save her husband. If Don Severo would let her enter the room she would so inundate him with tears and close him round with the passion of her love that he would no longer doubt. How could she

be the victim of a hideous passion, she asks, be unconsciously influenced by it, and in some sad and weak moment yield to the senses?

Mer. Do not cry so, Teodora. I believe in you. Enough! No more tears. Let me but add one more word, and there's an end to the matter. Ernest is not what you believe him to be. He is not worthy of your trust.

Teo. He is good, Mercedes.

Mer. No!

Teo. He is fond of Julian.

Mer. He would betray him.

Teo. Again! My God!

Mer. I no longer accuse you of responding to his passion, but I only assert—I would warn you—that *he loves you.*

Teo. [*rising in anger*]. Loves me!

Mer. It is known to everybody. In this very room, a moment ago, before Pepito and me—you understand?

Teo. No, explain at once—what?

Mer. He openly confessed it. He made a violent declaration, swore that he was ready to sacrifice life, honor, soul, and conscience for you. And when you came, he wanted to see you. He only yielded to the force of my entreaties and went away. I tremble lest he should meet Severo and their encounter lead to an explosion. And you—what have you to say now?

Teo. [*who has listened to* MERCEDES *intently, held in an indefinable, gloomy terror*]. Heavens above! Can it be true? And I who felt—who professed so sincere an affection for him!

Mer. There, you are on the point of crying again.

Teo. The heart has no tears for the manifold deceptions of this miserable life. A lad so pure and finely natured—and to see him now so debased and spotted! And you say that he actually uttered those words here—he!—Ernest! Oh, oh, Mercedes! send him away from this house.

Mer. Ah, that is what I wanted. Your energy consoles me. [*With evidence of honest satisfaction.*] Pardon me—now I fully believe you. [*Embraces her.*]

Teodora is deeply shocked to find that Mercedes did not believe in her before. She declares that she will not see

Ernest, but Mercedes urges her to show him her contempt, and as Ernest comes in she leaves Teodora with him. Teodora merely says adieu to Ernest, and wishes him all happiness. He waits for a moment to see if she will offer him her hand. She says she forgives him all the injury he has done them, but that her husband is dying in there and she feels as if she, too, were dying. He has fallen upon his knee and taken her hand when a door opens and Don Severo stands glowering at them.

In a voice of concentrated anger, pitched low so that Don Julian will not hear, Don Severo exclaims that he can find no epithet adequate to the passion of his contempt for Ernest. He orders him to leave the house. Ernest replies that he was upon the point of going but that this insult has rooted his heels to the floor. Don Severo is about to call the servants to put him out when Teodora moves between them.

Teodora says they seem to forget that this is her house as long as her husband lives and is its owner. She asks Ernest to go. He bows and turns away, but stops as Don Severo angrily tells Teodora she is an audacious and wretched woman, and accuses her as responsible for the spilling of his brother's blood. Don Severo demands to know why she returned and seizes her brutally by the arm. Ernest rushes back and seizes Don Severo violently.

Severo. You impudent puppy!

Ern. True, but I'll not release you. You loved and respected your mother, I presume. For that reason you must respect Teodora, and humbly bow before a sorrow so immense as hers. This woman, sir, is purer, more honest than the mother of such a man as you.

Severo. This to me?

Ern. Yes, and I have not yet done.

Severo. Your life——

Ern. Oh, my life, as much as you like—but afterward. [TEODORA *endeavors to part them, but he pushes her gently away, without releasing* DON SEVERO.] You believe in a God—in a Maker—in hope. Well, then, as you bend your knee before the altar of that God above, so will I compel you to kneel to Teodora—and that instantly, sir. Down—in the dust.

Teo. For mercy's sake——

Ernest forces Don Severo to his knees. Teodora begs him to release him, pointing in terror at Don Julian's door. Ernest permits Don Severo to rise, and at that moment they hear Don Julian telling some one to let him go, and Mercedes' voice restraining him. The door opens. Don Julian enters, pale and dying, Mercedes holding his arm.

Julian. Together! Where are they going? Who detains them here? Away with you, traitors. [*Wants to rush at them, but strength fails him, and he staggers back.*]

Severo [*hurrying to his assistance*]. No, no!

Julian. Severo, they deceived me—they lied to me—the miserable pair! [*While he speaks* DON SEVERO *and* DONA MERCEDES *lead him to the armchair.*] There, look at them—both—she and Ernest! Why are they together?

Teo. and Ern. [*separating*]. No.

Julian. Why don't they come to me? Teodora!

Teo. [*stretches out her arms but does not advance*]. Julian!

Julian. Here in my arms. [TEODORA *runs forward and flings herself into* DON JULIAN'S *arms, who clasps her feverishly. Pause.*] You see—you see—[*to* DON SEVERO] —I know well enough they were deceiving me. I hold her thus in my arms. I crush and subdue her—I might kill her—so! and 'tis only what she deserves. But I look at her—*I look at her*—and then I cannot!

He tells her not to lie, saying he knows she loves Ernest. Their protests do not move him. All Madrid knows it, too, he declares. He will have no protests or deceitful words. He works upon his anger and calls them wretched traitors.

Ern. It is fever that misleads you—not the testimony of your eyes.

Julian. Fever, yes. And since fever is fire, it has burnt away the bandage with which before you two had blinded me, and at last I see you for what you are. And now!—but why these glances at one another? Why, traitors? Why do your eyes gleam so? Tell me, Ernest. There are no tears in them to make them shine. Come nearer—nearer to me. [*Draws* ERNEST *to him, bends his head, and then succeeds in thrusting him upon his knees. He passes his hand over* ERNEST'S *eyes.*] You see—no tears—no tears—they are quite dry.

Ern. Forgive me! Forgive me!

Julian. You ask my forgiveness? Then you acknowledge your sin?

Ern. No.

Julian. Yes.

Ern. I say it is not so!

Julian. Then here before me, look at her.

Severo. Julian.

Mer. Sir!

Julian [*to* TEODORA *and* ERNEST]. Perhaps you are afraid? So it is not like a brother that you cherish her? If so, prove it. Let me see what sort of light shines in your eyes as they meet—whether, to my close inspection, the rays dart passion's flame or mild affection. Come here, Teodora. Both—so—still nearer. [*Drags* TEODORA *until she stumbles, so that both faces are compelled toward each other.*]

Teo. [*frees herself with a violent effort*]. Oh, no!

Ern. [*also strives to free himself, but is held in* DON JULIAN'S *grasp*]. I cannot.

Julian. You love one another—you can't deny it, for I've seen it. [*To* ERNEST.] Your life!

Ern. Yes.

Julian. Your blood!

Ern. All.

Julian [*forcing him to his knees*]. Stay still.

Teo. Julian!

Julian. Ah, you defend him, you defend him.

Teo. Not for his sake.

Severo. In God's name——

Julian [*to* SEVERO]. Silence. [*Still holds* ERNEST *down.*] Bad friend, bad son!

Ern. My father!

Julian. Disloyal! Traitor!

Ern. No, father.

Julian. Here is my shameful seal upon your cheek. To-day with my hand—soon with steel—so! [*With a supreme effort strikes* ERNEST. ERNEST *jumps up with a terrible cry, and turns away, covering his face.*]

Everybody utters a startled cry. There is a moment of stupefaction, and then Mercedes and Don Severo endeavor to calm Don Julian, who stands staring at Ernest. They take him away with difficulty. At the door he stops and

looks back. Teodora, he says, is crying for Ernest; she does not see that he is dying. He crosses the threshold and they close the door.

Ernest asks what is the use of loyalty, and Teodora what is the use of innocence. They hear Don Severo cry out and then Mercedes.

Ern. He is dying.

Teo. Come at once.

Ern. Where?

Teo. To him.

Ern. We cannot. [*Detains her.*]

Teo. Why not? I want him to live.

Ern. And I!—but I cannot. [*Points to* DON JULIAN'S *room.*]

Teo. Then I will. [*Rushes to the door.* PEPITO *and, behind him,* DON SEVERO *bar the way.*]

Pep. Where are you going?

Teo. [*in desperation*]. I must see him.

Pep. It is impossible.

Severo. She cannot pass. This woman must not remain in my house—turn her out at once! [*To* PEPITO.] No compassion—this very moment.

Ern. What!

Teo. My mind is wandering.

Severo. Though your mother should stand in front of that woman, Pepito, you have my orders. Obey them. Never mind her prayers or supplications. If she should cry—then let her cry. [*With concentrated fury.*] Away with her, away—else I might kill her.

Teo. Julian orders——

Severo. Yes, Julian.

Ern. Her husband! It cannot be.

Teo. I must see him.

Severo. Very well. Look at him once more—and then —depart.

Pep. [*interfering*]. Father——

Severo [*pushing him away*]. Stop, sir!

Teo. It can't be true.

Pep. This is too horrible.

Teo. It is a lie!

Severo. Come, Teodora—come and see. [*Seizes her arm and leads her to the door.*]

Teo. Oh! My husband! Julian—dead. [*Staggers shudderingly back, and falls half senseless.*]

Ern. [*covering his face*]. My father! [*Pause.* DON SEVERO *watches them rancorously.*]

Severo [*to his son*]. Turn her out.

Ern. [*placing himself before* TEODORA]. What cruelty!

Pep. [*doubting*]. Sir——

Severo [*to* PEPITO]. Such are my orders. Do you doubt my word?

Ern. Pity.

Severo [*pointing to the death chamber*]. Yes, such pity as she showed him.

Ern. Fire races through my veins. I will leave Spain, sir.

Severo. It makes no difference.

Ern. She will die.

Severo. Life is short.

Ern. For the last time——

Severo. No more. [*To his son.*] Ring!

Ern. But I tell you she is innocent. I swear it.

Pep. [*interceding*]. Father——

Severo [*with a contemptuous gesture*]. That fellow lies.

Ern. You impel me with the current. Then I will not struggle against it. I go with it. I cannot yet know what may be her opinion—[*pointing to* TEODORA]—of others and of your outrages. Her lips are silent, mute her thoughts. But what I think of it all—yes, I will tell you.

Severo. It is useless. It won't prevent me from—— [*Approaches* TEODORA.]

Pep. [*restraining him*]. Father——

Ern. Stay. [*Pause.*] Let nobody touch this woman. She is mine. The world has so desired it, and its decision I accept. It has driven her to my arms. Come, Teodora. [*He raises her, and sustains her.*] You cast her forth from here. We obey you.

Severo. At last, you blackguard!

Ern. Yes; now you are right. I will confess now. Do you want passion? Then passion and delirium. Do you want love? Then love—boundless love. Do you want more? Then more and more. Nothing daunts me. Yours the invention, I give it shelter. So you may tell the tale. It echoes through all this heroic town. But should

any one ask you who was the infamous intermediary in this infamy, you will reply "ourselves without being aware of it, and with us the stupid chatter of busybodies." Come, Teodora; my mother's spirit kisses your pure brow. Adieu, all. She belongs to me, and let heaven choose its day to judge between you and me. [*Gathers* TEODORA *into his embrace, with a glance of defiance around.*]

THE SUBMERGED*

By Maxim Gorki

In "The Submerged" Gorki pictures the dregs of humanity gathered in a lodging-house of the poorest sort, men and women who are considered of as little value as vermin. An old pilgrim tries to awaken the beauty in the souls of these derelicts. Will any of those aroused to effort be able to raise themselves to the surface or will they be forced down by society?

It is a morning of early spring. Light falling through a square window in a vaulted stone ceiling reveals a basement room with walls of solid masonry. Extended upon benches are several lodgers, hapless and helpless outcasts of a large Russian city. Three persons are occupied: Kleshtsch, a lockmaker by trade, is at work on an old lock. Bubnoff is cutting out caps from an old pair of trousers. Nastiah, a girl of twenty-four, is reading a book entitled "Disastrous Love."

There is one bed in the room. In it lies a sick woman, the locksmith's wife, Anna. Now and then she is annoyed beyond endurance by the loud talking and quarrelling of the inmates. She asks if they will not let her die in peace. Bubnoff replies that the noise is not keeping her from dying. She complains that the room is stifling, but her husband says he can do nothing about that, for if the door were opened he should catch cold. An actor who is suffering from alcoholic poisoning helps her to get up and go out and sit in the entry way.

The keeper of the lodging-room is Kostilioff, a man of fifty-four. Coming in, he takes a mistrustful look about, goes to one end of the room and listens at a partition.

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Kleshtsch claps furiously with his keys and files noisily. The proprietor gives him a black look and asks if his wife has been in, but Kleshtsch replies that he has not seen her. Kostilioft knocks on a door in the partition and calls for Waska Pepel, the tenant of the space on the other side.

Opening the door, Pepel asks what Kostilioff is bothering him about. Kostilioff peers into the room but seems to find nothing to say. Pepel, however, demands seven rubles on a watch that Kostilioff was going to dispose of for him. The landlord replies that he never receives stolen goods, and goes away again. One of the lodgers asks Pepel why he does not finish Kostilioff, marry Wassilissa, and become their landlord. The game does not seem worth the candle to Pepel. The Actor, having wheedled a few copecs from Pepel, invites Sahtin, one of the other lodgers, to come out with him and get as drunk as forty thousand topers.

Natasha, the sister of Wassilissa, brings in a new lodger, Luka. He is an old man who has a staff in his hand, a sack on his back, and a small kettle and tea boiler at his belt. He greets the inmates as "honest folks."

Bubnoff. Honest were we once, as you must know, but since last spring, a year ago . . .

Luka. It's all the same to me. I know how to respect thieves, too. Any flea, say I, may be just as good as you or me; all are black, and all jump . . . that's the truth. Where shall I quarter myself here, my love?

Natasha [points to the kitchen door]. Go in there, daddy.

Luka. Thank you, my girl, as you say . . . . a warm corner is an old man's delight. *[Goes into the kitchen.]*

Pepel. What an agreeable old chap you have brought along, Natasha.

Nat. No matter, he is more interesting than you. *[Then to* KLESHTSCH.] Andrew, your wife is with us in the kitchen . . . come for her after a while.

Kleshtsch. All right, I'll come.

Nat. Be good to her now . . . we won't have her long. *[Goes out.]*

Pepel. A fine girl.

Bub. None better.

Pepel. But what has set her against me so? She alone

. . . always refusing me . . . but this life will be her ruin, all the same.

Bub. It is you who will be the ruin of her.

Pepel. I be her ruin . . . I pity her . . .

Bub. As the wolf pities the lamb.

Pepel. You lie! I do pity her . . . her lot is very hard. . . . I see that. . . .

Klesh. Just wait until Wassilissa finds you together.

Bub. Yes, Wassilissa! Nobody can play any tricks on her, the fiend.

Pepel [*stretches himself out on the bunk*]. The devil take you both, prophets.

Klesh. Wait . . . and see. . . .

Luka [*within singing*]. "In the darkness of midnight no path can be found."

Klesh. Now he is beginning to howl. . . . He, too, is beginning. [*Goes out.*]

Pepel. My heart is in the depths . . . why is it? We live and live and everything goes well . . . then all of a sudden . . . melancholy like a blighting frost settles upon us. Life is used up . . .

Bub. Sad, melancholy, eh?

Pepel. Yes . . . by God.

Luka [*singing*]. "No path can be found."

Pepel. Heh, you bag of bones.

Luka [*enters*]. Do you mean me?

Pepel. Yes, you. Cut out the singing.

Luka says that there is a girl in the kitchen weeping over a book because the people in it are so pitiful, and that that is the way she passes her time to drive away despondency. Among the lodgers is a baron who, when he came there, did not take the inmates for human beings even. Now Pepel makes him beg for liquor by getting down on the floor and barking like a dog.

Baron. To be sure, we have all seen better days. I, for example . . . on waking up I used to drink my coffee in bed . . . coffee with cream . . . that's right.

Luka. And you are still a man. No matter what somersaults you turn before us, as a man you were born and as a man you must die. The more I look about myself, the more I contemplate mankind, the more interesting

he grows . . . poorer and poorer he sinks and higher and higher his aspirations mount . . . obstinacy.

Baron. Tell me, old man . . . exactly who you are . . . where do you come from?

Luka. Who? I?

Baron. Are you a pilgrim?

Luka. We are all pilgrims here on this earth. . . . It has been said, even, I am told, that our earth is only a pilgrimage to Heaven's gate. . . .

Baron. It is so, but tell me . . . have you a passport?

Luka [*hesitatingly*]. Who are you? A detective?

Pepel [*briskly*]. Well said, old man! Ha, my lord, that went home!

Bub. He gets what's coming to him.

Baron [*disconcerted*]. Well! well! I am only joking, old man. I've no papers, myself.

Bub. You lie!

Baron. That is to say . . . I have papers . . . but they're of no use.

Luka. So it is with all pen scratches. They're of no use.

Pepel and the Baron go out. Bubnoff tells Luka that the former was a noble, and says that even now the manner clings to him, for breeding is like smallpox, the man recovers but the pits remain.

A drunken cobbler comes in and creates a disturbance, and after he has gone away Medviedeff, Wassilissa's uncle, who is a policeman, enters. Meanwhile Luka has found the sick woman creeping about alone in the entry, clinging to the walls and moaning with pain and weakness. He brings her in to the bed and asks why the others have abandoned her so. A noise suddenly breaks out above, stamping and smothered cries.

Medviedeff. Ah, the service! Why should people be pulled apart when they brawl? They finally quit fighting of their own accord . . . when they are tired of thumping each other . . . the best thing to do is to let them get their bellies full of fighting . . . then they don't row so often . . . they aren't in shape to. . . .

Bub. [*gets off his bench*]. You must lay your plan before the authorities. . . .

Ern. Forgive me! Forgive me!

Julian. You ask my forgiveness? Then you acknowledge your sin?

Ern. No.

Julian. Yes.

Ern. I say it is not so!

Julian. Then here before me, look at her.

Severo. Julian.

Mer. Sir!

Julian [*to* TEODORA *and* ERNEST]. Perhaps you are afraid? So it is not like a brother that you cherish her? If so, prove it. Let me see what sort of light shines in your eyes as they meet—whether, to my close inspection, the rays dart passion's flame or mild affection. Come here, Teodora. Both—so—still nearer. [*Drags* TEODORA *until she stumbles, so that both faces are compelled toward each other.*]

Teo. [*frees herself with a violent effort*]. Oh, no!

Ern. [*also strives to free himself, but is held in* DON JULIAN'S *grasp*]. I cannot.

Julian. You love one another—you can't deny it, for I've seen it. [*To* ERNEST.] Your life!

Ern. Yes.

Julian. Your blood!

Ern. All.

Julian [*forcing him to his knees*]. Stay still.

Teo. Julian!

Julian. Ah, you defend him, you defend him.

Teo. Not for his sake.

Severo. In God's name——

Julian [*to* SEVERO]. Silence. [*Still holds* ERNEST *down.*] Bad friend, bad son!

Ern. My father!

Julian. Disloyal! Traitor!

Ern. No, father.

Julian. Here is my shameful seal upon your cheek. To-day with my hand—soon with steel—so! [*With a supreme effort strikes* ERNEST. ERNEST *jumps up with a terrible cry, and turns away, covering his face.*]

Everybody utters a startled cry. There is a moment of stupefaction, and then Mercedes and Don Severo endeavor to calm Don Julian, who stands staring at Ernest. They take him away with difficulty. At the door he stops and

looks back. Teodora, he says, is crying for Ernest; she does not see that he is dying. He crosses the threshold and they close the door.

Ernest asks what is the use of loyalty, and Teodora what is the use of innocence. They hear Don Severo cry out and then Mercedes.

Ern. He is dying.

Teo. Come at once.

Ern. Where?

Teo. To him.

Ern. We cannot. [*Detains her.*]

Teo. Why not? I want him to live.

Ern. And I!—but I cannot. [*Points to* DON JULIAN'S *room.*]

Teo. Then I will. [*Rushes to the door.* PEPITO *and, behind him,* DON SEVERO *bar the way.*]

Pep. Where are you going?

Teo. [*in desperation*]. I must see him.

Pep. It is impossible.

Severo. She cannot pass. This woman must not remain in my house—turn her out at once! [*To* PEPITO.] No compassion—this very moment.

Ern. What!

Teo. My mind is wandering.

Severo. Though your mother should stand in front of that woman, Pepito, you have my orders. Obey them. Never mind her prayers or supplications. If she should cry—then let her cry. [*With concentrated fury.*] Away with her, away—else I might kill her.

Teo. Julian orders——

Severo. Yes, Julian.

Ern. Her husband! It cannot be.

Teo. I must see him.

Severo. Very well. Look at him once more—and then —depart.

Pep. [*interfering*]. Father——

Severo [*pushing him away*]. Stop, sir!

Teo. It can't be true.

Pep. This is too horrible.

Teo. It is a lie!

Severo. Come, Teodora—come and see. [*Seizes her arm and leads her to the door.*]

Teo. Oh! My husband! Julian—dead. [*Staggers shudderingly back, and falls half senseless.*]

Ern. [*covering his face*]. My father! [*Pause.* DON SEVERO *watches them rancorously.*]

Severo [*to his son*]. Turn her out.

Ern. [*placing himself before* TEODORA]. What cruelty!

Pep. [*doubting*]. Sir——

Severo [*to* PEPITO]. Such are my orders. Do you doubt my word?

Ern. Pity.

Severo [*pointing to the death chamber*]. Yes, such pity as she showed him.

Ern. Fire races through my veins. I will leave Spain, sir.

Severo. It makes no difference.

Ern. She will die.

Severo. Life is short.

Ern. For the last time——

Severo. No more. [*To his son.*] Ring!

Ern. But I tell you she is innocent. I swear it.

Pep. [*interceding*]. Father——

Severo [*with a contemptuous gesture*]. That fellow lies.

Ern. You impel me with the current. Then I will not struggle against it. I go with it. I cannot yet know what may be her opinion—[*pointing to* TEODORA]—of others and of your outrages. Her lips are silent, mute her thoughts. But what I think of it all—yes, I will tell you.

Severo. It is useless. It won't prevent me from—— [*Approaches* TEODORA.]

Pep. [*restraining him*]. Father——

Ern. Stay. [*Pause.*] Let nobody touch this woman. She is mine. The world has so desired it, and its decision I accept. It has driven her to my arms. Come, Teodora. [*He raises her, and sustains her.*] You cast her forth from here. We obey you.

Severo. At last, you blackguard!

Ern. Yes; now you are right. I will confess now. Do you want passion? Then passion and delirium. Do you want love? Then love—boundless love. Do you want more? Then more and more. Nothing daunts me. Yours the invention, I give it shelter. So you may tell the tale. It echoes through all this heroic town. But should

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There is one bed in the room. In it lies a sick woman, the locksmith's wife, Anna. Now and then she is annoyed beyond endurance by the loud talking and quarrelling of the inmates. She asks if they will not let her die in peace. Bubnoff replies that the noise is not keeping her from dying. She complains that the room is stifling, but her husband says he can do nothing about that, for if the door were opened he should catch cold. An actor who is suffering from alcoholic poisoning helps her to get up and go out and sit in the entry way.

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Pepel. You are no nail and I am no tongs . . . I had thought you would finish him; with your slyness . . . for you are sly and quickwitted . . . [*Sits at R. table.*]

Was. [*leans toward him*]. Waska, we will help each other. . . .

Pepel. How, then?

Was. [*in a low tone, with expression*]. My sister . . . you have taken a fancy to her, I know it. . . .

Pepel. And you knock her about so brutally on that account. I'll say this to you, Waska: don't touch her again.

Was. Wait. Not so hotly. It can all be done quietly, in friendliness. . . . Marry her whenever you feel like it. I'll find the money, three hundred rubles. If I can get more I'll give you more.

Pepel [*rocks on his seat back and forth*]. Hold on. . . . How do you mean that. What for?

She wants her husband put out of the way. If he is afraid to do it himself, he can get some one. Natasha dreads him, too, for he oppresses both of them. While she is arguing with him Kostilioff comes in warily. He remarks that he finds them alone, and asks if they have been chatting for a spell. Then he suddenly stamps his feet and screeches aloud, execrating Wassilissa. Frightened by his own voice, which is answered only by an echoing silence, he asks the Lord for mercy. Pepel tells him to get out, and they begin to wrangle. Finally Pepel seizes him by the collar and begins to shake him.

There is a sound from the direction of the stove. Pepel loosens his hold, as Luka, pretending to be just waking, crawls down. Kostilioff goes out and Wassilissa follows him. Luka says it was lucky he was there. He counsels Pepel to keep away from Wassilissa, and not to listen to her on any account. He shows his bald head. There is not a hair left, he says, and all because of the women, for perhaps he has known more women than he had hairs on his head.

Luka. Say no more. . . . Listen. If there is a girl, take the one you like best—take her by the hand and go away together; quite away, a long way off. . . .

Pepel [*gloomily*]. We cannot know each other: who is

good, who is bad. . . . Nothing certain is known to us. . . .

Luka. Of what importance can that be? Man's ways vary . . . following the different desires of his heart; so he lives, good to-day, bad to-morrow. And if you love the girl, then pull out, settle it. Or go alone. You are young, you have still time enough to be enmeshed by a woman.

Pepel [*takes him by the shoulder*]. No, but say—why do you tell me all this. . . .

Luka. Hold on. Let me go . . . I must look after Anna. . . . Her throat is rattling. [*He goes to* ANNA'S *bed, strikes the curtain back, looks at the prostrate form and touches it with his hand.* PEPEL, *uneasy and depressed, follows him.*] Lord Jesus Christ, All Powerful! receive in peace the soul of this newcomer, thy servant Anna . . .

The lodgers begin to come back, some of them drunk, and there is more rowing and noise than usual.

At the rear of the lodging-house, between it and a stable, is an open space filled with rubbish and weeds. The setting sun throws a red light against a brick wall that shuts off the rear. Natasha and Nastiah are sitting on a beam, and Luka and the Baron on a pile of boards. Bubnoff is looking out of a low window.

Nastiah [*with closed eyes, moving her head in time to the story which she is telling in a singsong voice*]. In the night, then, he came to the garden, to the summer bower, as we had arranged . . . I had waited long, trembling for fear and grief . . . and he, too, was trembling from head to foot, and chalk white, but in his hand he held a . . . pistol. . . .

Nat. [*nibbling at sunflower seeds*]. *Just* listen . . . these students are all as mad as March hares.

Nas. And in a terrible voice, he said to me: my true love. . . .

Bub. Ha, ha, my "true" love, did he say?

Baron. Be still there, let her humbug in peace—you don't have to listen if it don't please you . . . go on.

Nas. My heart's distraction, said he, my golden treasure; my parents refuse to allow me, said he, to marry you, and threaten me with their curses if I do not give you up, and so I must, said he, take my life . . . and his pistol

was frightfully large, and loaded with ten bullets. . . . Farewell, said he, true friend of my heart! My decision is irrevocable . . . I cannot live without you. But I answered him, my never-to-be-forgotten friend . . . my Raoul. . . .

Bub. [*astonished*]. What's his name . . . Graul?

Baron. You are mistaken, Nastiah! The last time you called him Gaston.

Nas. [*springing up*]. Silence! You vagabond curs! Can you understand what love is . . . real, genuine love! And I . . . I have tasted this genuine love. [*To the* BARON.] You unworthy scamp. . . . You were an educated man . . . you say, have drunk your coffee in bed. . . .

Luka. Have patience! Don't scold her! Show human beings some consideration. . . . It is not what man says but why he says it—that's the point. Keep on, my love—they don't mean anything.

Bub. Always laying on the bright hues, raven . . . Nyah, cut loose again!

Baron. Go on.

Nat. Pay no attention to them . . . who are they, anyway? They only speak out of envy . . . because they have nothing to tell about themselves . . .

Nas. [*sits down again*]. I don't want to . . . I won't tell anything more . . . if they don't like to believe it . . . and laugh about it. [*Suddenly brightens up. Is silent a few seconds, closes her eyes again and begins in a loud and rapid voice, keeping time with her hand, while in the distance ringing music is heard.*] And I answered him: Joy of my life! O my glittering star! Without you I, too, could not live . . . because I love you madly and must love you always, as long as my heart beats in my bosom! But, said I, rob yourself not of your young life . . . for look, your dear parents whose single joy you are—they stand in need of you. Give me up . . . I would rather pine away . . . out of longing for you, my love . . . I am—alone . . . I am—wholly yours . . . yes, let me die . . . what matters it . . . I am good for nothing . . . and have nothing . . . absolutely nothing . . . [*Covers her face with her hands and cries softly.*]

Nat. [*goes to her side, quietly*]. Don't. [LUKA *strokes* NASTIAH'S *head, laughing.*]

Bub. [*laughs aloud*]. Oh . . . ho . . . a deceiving minx . . . eh?

The Baron says she gets the story out of "Disastrous Love." Nastiah asks him furiously where his soul is, but Luka pacifies her, and assures her that if she believes herself what she says, then she has had just such true love. He goes away with her. The Baron says the old man is good-hearted but intolerably stupid. Bubnoff finds him always lying as if he were before a coroner. Natasha admits that she thinks lots of lies, and waits. She thinks perhaps somebody will come to-morrow, or something may happen. The Baron replies that none of them can expect anything at all. Luka comes back again and reproves the Baron for tormenting Nastiah.

Luka. Go, treat her with friendliness . . . treat every one with friendliness—injure no one.

Nat. How good you are, grandfather . . . how is it that you are so good?

Luka. I am good, you say. Nyah . . . if it is true, all right. . . . [*Behind the red wall is heard soft singing and accordeon playing.*] But you see, my girl—there must be some one to be good . . . We must have pity on mankind. Christ, remember, had pity for us all and so taught us to be likewise. Have pity when there is still time, believe me, it is very good.

Klesh. [*springing up as though stabbed, crying*]. What is the truth? Where is the truth—where! [*Beats with his hands on his torn clothes.*] There is the truth—there! No work. . . . No strength . . . in the limbs—that is the truth! No shelter . . . no shelter. . . . It is time to die, that is your truth, curse it! What is it to me, this—truth? Only let me sigh in peace—let me sigh. What have I done? Why the devil should we have truth? Curse it, we can't live . . . that is the truth!

Bub. Just listen . . . he is full of matter. . . .

Luka. The good Lord . . . but say, my friend, you. . . .

Klesh. [*trembling with excitement*]. I have heard you talk of the truth. You, pilgrim—you consoling every one . . . and I say to you: I hate every one. And this

truth, too, this accursed truth . . . do you understand? Mark you, accursed shall truth be.

[*Hurries out, looking back as he goes.*

The truth is not a cure for every ill, Luka says, and he tells a story of a man who had always believed that there was a land of justice, but finding at last that it was not shown on any map he went home and strangled himself.

Luka tells them that he will leave them soon. He is going to Little Russia where, he has heard, they have discovered a new religion. He will go and see what it is. Men search and search, always looking for something better, he says. Pepel, who has come out, asks if he thinks they will find it. Luka replies that they certainly shall find it. He who yearns finds; he who searches zealously finds. Natasha hopes they will find something. Luka tells her she can help.

Pepel now asks Natasha to leave the place and go away with him. He has already promised that he will give up stealing. He has no regret, having consoled his conscience with the thought that others steal more than he and are respected. But he feels that he must live in a different way. He must live so that he can respect himself. To-day, Natasha says, she is disquieted; she dreads something. She would not begin to-day. She says she loves him . . . not too much . . . sometimes she likes him . . . but then at times she cannot look at him . . . in any case she does not love him . . . when one loves, one sees no fault in the one beloved. He tells her that he has been watching her for a year and sees that she is a good, true woman, and that he loves her with all his heart. Wassilissa comes in at the back and stands there.

Pepel [*gloomily*]. Have pity on me. It is no easy life that I lead—friendless; pursued like a wolf. . . . I sink like a man in a swamp . . . whatever I clutch is slimy and rotten . . . nothing is firm . . . your sister, though, would be different . . . if she were not so avaricious . . . I would have risked everything for her . . . if she had only kept faith with me . . . but her heart is set on something else . . . her heart is full of greed . . . and longs for freedom—and only that longing in order to become more dissolute. She

cannot help me . . . but you—like a young fir tree, you are prickly but you give support. . . .

Luka. And I say to you: take him, my daughter, take him. He is a good-hearted boy. All you must do is to remind him often that he is good . . . so that he will not forget it. He will soon believe you. Only say to him, often: Waska, you are a good man . . . don't forget it! Think it over, my love—what else shall you begin? Your sister—she is a bad lot: and of her husband—nothing good can be said either: no words can be found to express his baseness . . . and this whole life here . . . where shall you find a way out? . . . But Waska . . . he is a lusty fellow.

Nat. I cannot find a way . . . I know that . . . I have already thought it over myself . . . but I . . . whom can I trust? . . . I see no way out. . . .

Pepel. There is but one way . . . but I shall not let you take it . . . I would kill you first. . . .

Nat. [*laughing*]. Just look . . . I am not yet your wife, and you will already kill me.

Pepel [*putting his arms around her*]. Say, "yes," Natasha. It will soon be well. . . .

Nat. [*presses him affectionately*]. . . . One thing I will tell you, Wassili. . . . And God shall be my witness: if you strike me a single time . . . or insult me . . . that shall be the end . . . either I hang myself, or . . .

Pepel. May this hand wither up if I touch you . . .

Luka assures Natasha that she can believe him, and that they are necessary to each other's happiness. Natasha is frightened at discovering that Wassilissa has been watching them and overhearing what they said. Pepel says she has nothing to fear now. Kostilioff also comes out and orders Natasha into the house to work. Pepel tells her not to obey, but stung by taunts that Wassilissa flings at him he is unable to keep his temper and finally acts on Luka's advice and goes away.

Kostilioff advances on Luka threateningly and demands to know what he is stirring up. He tells him he had better not concern himself with other people's affairs, and then asks if he has his passport. Luka says that Kostilioff is a

stony field, not worth sowing. Kostilioff tells him to keep out of the row, and to leave the house. Wassilissa echoes his injunction, remarking that Luka's tongue is too long, and that for all any one knows he may be an escaped convict.

Kostilioff intimates that something disagreeable will happen unless Luka disappears that evening. Luka inquires if otherwise he does not mean to call his wife's uncle, who is on the police force, and tell him that he can obtain a reward of three copecs by catching a convict. Bubnoff sticks his head out of the window and asks what they are haggling about. Luka replies, "We are trying to sell me." Bubnoff advises him to take care lest they sell him for one copec.

When the lodging-house keeper and his wife have taken themselves off, Sahtin comes in with the Actor. They are quarrelling, and Sahtin asks Luka what spark he has cast into this burned stump. The Actor has worked cleaning the pavement and has not drunk any spirits. He shows the money he has received, which Sahtin is trying to persuade him to spend on liquor. The Actor says it is for his journey.

Screaming suddenly breaks out in the house.

Nat. [*within*]. What are you doing—stop . . . what have I done?

Luka [*disquieted*]. Who is screaming there? Was it not Natasha? Ah, you. . . . [*From* KOSTILIOFF's *room is heard a loud alarm, and then from the kitchen the sound of crashing dishes.*]

Kos. [*within, screaming*]. A—ah—you cat—you . . . heathen.

Was. [*within*]. Wait . . . I'll give her . . . so . . . so . . . and so . . .

Nat. [*within*]. Help! They are killing me!

Sahtin [*into the passage shouting*]. Heh, there! What are you howling about?

Luka [*walks about uneasily*]. Wasja . . . he must be called. . . . Wassili. . . . Oh, God. . . . Children, my dears.

Actor [*hurries out*]. I'll bring him . . . right away. . . .

Bub. They're treating the poor girl badly these days.

Sahtin. Come, pilgrim . . . we will be witnesses.

Luka [*exit after* SAHTIN]. Why witnesses? Too often, already, have I been a witness. If Waska would only come . . . Oh! this is terrible!

Nat. [*within*]. Sister . . . dear sister . . . wah . . . wa . . . a. . . .

Bub. Now they have stopped her mouth. . . . I'll see myself. [*The noise in* KOSTILIOFF'S *room is weaker, and nothing comes from the kitchen.*]

Kos. [*within*]. Halt! [*A door is slammed within, and the whole noise is cut off as if by a hatchet. On the stage silence. . . . It is twilight.*]

Klesh. [*sits on bench taking no part, and rubbing his hands together. Then he begins to mumble to himself, at first indistinctly. Then louder*]. How, then? . . . a man must live. [*Louder.*] At least a shelter . . . but no, not that . . . not even a corner where I can lie down. . . . Nothing but the bare man . . . helpless and deserted. [*Ex. bent over, slowly.*

For a few moments ominous silence. Then somewhere within a terrible noise, a chaos of tones, louder and louder and nearer and nearer. Then a single voice is heard.

Was. [*within*]. I am her sister. Let me go. . . .

Kost. [*within*]. What right have you to interfere?

Was. [*within*]. You convict!

Sahtin [*within*]. Bring Wasjka . . . be quick . . . Zoba, strike. [*A policeman's whistle is heard.*]

Tartar [*jumps down the steps, his right hand bound up*]. What sort of laws are these . . . to murder in broad daylight? [KRIVOI ZOBA *hurries in, followed by* KOSTILIOFF.]

Krivoi Zoba. Now, he got it from me.

Med. How did you come to strike him?

Tartar. And you—do you not know what your duty is?

Med. [*running after* KRIVOI ZOBA]. Stop! Give me my whistle back. [*Exit.*

Kos. [*enters*]. Abram! Catch him . . . hold him tight. He has killed me. . . .

Down the steps come Kvaschnya and Nastiah. They help Natasha, who is badly beaten up. Sahtin runs up the stairs, bumping into Wassilissa, who is throwing her arms about and trying to strike her sister. Alyoschka is jump-

ing around like one possessed. He whistles in Wassilissa's ear and howls. A couple of ragged fellows and some men and women appear.

Sahtin [*to* WASSILISSA]. Enough, you damned owl!

Was. Away, convict. If it costs me my life, I will tear her to pieces.

Kvaschnya [*leads* NATASHA *aside*]. Stop, Karpovna . . . for shame! How can you be so inhuman?

Med. [*reënters, takes* SAHTIN *by the collar*]. Aha! Now I have you!

Sahtin. Krivoi Zoba. Strike. . . . Wasja, Wasja. [*All storm the entrance,* NATASHA *is taken to the bed, L.*]

PEPEL *enters. Pushes them away.*

Pepel. Where is Natasha, you?

Kost. [*crouches on the steps*]. Abram! Catch Wasjka . . . brother, help catch Wasjka . . . the thief . . . the robber. . . .

Pepel. There, you old goat. [*Strikes* KOSTILIOFF *brutally. He falls so that his body lies on the landing, his legs hidden up the stairs.* PEPEL *hurries to* NATASHA.]

Was. Fix Wasjka . . . friends . . . do up the thief!

Med. [*to* SAHTIN]. You shouldn't have interfered . . . this is a family affair here. They are all related to each other . . . and who are you?

Pepel [*to* NATASHA]. What did she hit you with? Did she stab you. . . .

Kvaschnya. Look what a beast. They have scalded her legs with hot water.

Nas. They turned the samovar over. . . .

Tartar. It might have been an accident . . . if you are not sure you should not accuse. . . .

Nat. [*half unconscious*]. Wassili . . . take me away . . . hide me. . . .

Was. Look, my friends . . . come here. He is dead . . . they have killed him. . . . [*All gather at the landing.* BUBNOFF *separates himself from the others and crosses to* PEPEL.]

Bub. [*softly*]. Wasjka! The old man . . . is done for.

Pepel [*looks at* BUBNOFF *as though he did not understand*]. Get a cab . . . she must be taken to the hospital. . . . I'll settle the bill.

Bub. Listen to what I'm saying. Somebody has finished the old man. . . .

[*The noise on the stage subsides like a fire into which water has been poured. Half-aloud separate sentences are uttered.*]

Is it really true?

We have it there.

Terrible.

We had better get out, brother.

The devil!

We need clear heads now.

Get out before the police come.

The group becomes smaller. Bubnoff and the Tartar disappear. Nastiah and Kvaschnya stoop over Kostilioff's body.

Wassilissa exults loudly over the murder of her husband. Suddenly catching sight of Pepel she declares that he did the act, that she saw him. He is restrained from setting upon her, and Sahtin leads him back to Natasha, telling him not to worry as one gets only a short sentence for killing somebody in a row. Pepel, who believes that he struck the fatal blow, says he will drag Wassilissa into it by swearing that he killed her husband at her instigation. Natasha seizes on this explanation. Pepel pleads with her not to think that he planned it with her sister. The police arrive.

Was. [*on the landing*]. They killed my husband . . . you high born . . . Waska Pepel, the thief, killed him, Mr. Commissioner, I saw it . . . everybody saw it.

Nat. [*waltzing about half senseless*]. Good people . . . my sister and Waska . . . they killed him. Mr. Policeman . . . listen to me . . . these two, my sister put him up to it . . . her lover . . . she instigated him . . . there he is, the accursed—the two did it. Arrest them . . . take them to court . . . and take me, too . . . to prison with me! For the sake of God . . . to prison.

Some of the former inmates of the lodging-house have disappeared and others have taken their places. It is night, and Sahtin, the Baron, and Nastiah are sitting about a table with a bottle of vodka, three bottles of beer, and a

hunk of black bread lying before them. The Actor is lying on the stove, shifting about and coughing. They discuss old Luka and his theories. He has stirred up some of the lodgers, but they do not know how to make a beginning on a new life. Kleshtsch starts up from a corner and declares the old man was no friend of the truth.

Sahtin claims that he understood Luka, though no one else did. What is truth? he asks. Mankind is truth. That, he says, was what the old man had seized upon. His lies he told out of sympathy, and they were soothing, conciliating lies. There are lies which justify the taking away of Kleshtsch's anvil and tools, which he had to give up to pay for his wife's burial; and lies which justify the mashed hand of the toiler, for the Tartar's hand was crushed at his work; and lies which bring charges against the starving.

Sahtin. He who has a timid heart . . . or lives at another's table, should be lied to . . . it gives him courage . . . puts a mantle on his shoulders . . . but he who is his own master, who is independent, and lives not from the sweat of another's brow . . . what are lies to him? The lie is the religion of servant and master . . . the truth is the inheritance of free men!

Once Sahtin asked Luka why men live, and his answer was: to give birth to strength. His theory was that every one was existing and working so that the occasional genius might be produced, and he gives a new face to a whole trade.

The allusion to genius reminds the Baron of the founder of his own family in the time of Catherine. His grandfather was a rich man, he says, and held a high position. Nastiah rails at him for his lies, and he breaks out in a passion. He swears he has documents to prove everything he says. Sahtin tells him to throw them into the stove, and to forget his grandfather's coach, for in the coach of the past nobody gets anywhere.

Sahtin asks Nastiah if she often goes to the hospital to see Natasha, but Nastiah tells them that Natasha left the hospital some time ago and has disappeared. She thinks that Wassilissa will lie herself out of her trouble and that Pepel will be sent to the mines.

Nastiah suddenly reviles her companions and dashes a

cup on the floor, to show what she would do to them if she could. When she has gone out Sahtin and the Baron tell of the crimes which wrecked their lives. The Baron at last goes out to look for Nastiah.

The Actor calls out after the Baron, "Pray for me." He repeats the same words to the Tartar, who tells him shortly to pray for himself. He gets down from the stove, pours out a glass of vodka, which he drinks with a trembling hand, and goes out hastily, almost running.

Medviedeff and Bubnoff enter. Bubnoff has a bottle of vodka under one arm and another in a pocket. He places them on the table and invites all to help themselves. If he were a rich man, he says, he would have a barroom in which everything would be free, with music and a choir of singers. He also has a bundle of pretzels and a couple of smoked fish, and invites his comrades to eat as well as drink in his free barroom.

From time to time couples enter, men and women, undress, stretch out on the bunks, and grumble to themselves. All the time Bubnoff's crowd are making a great row. Bubnoff asks Krivoi Zoba to strike up his favorite song.

Zoba [*sings*]. "Though still the sun goes up and down. . . ."

Bub. [*falls in*]. "No gleam can pierce to me in here."

[*The door is jerked open.*]

Baron [*on the platform, crying*]. Heh, there . . . you! Come quick . . . come out! In the yard . . . there . . . the actor . . . has hanged himself!

[*Silence, all stare at the* BARON. *Behind him appears* NASTIAH, *who, with staring eyes, goes to the table.*]

Sahtin [*softly*]. He must spoil our song . . . the fool.

BEYOND OUR POWER*

By Björnstjerne Björnsen

Translated by Edwin Björkman

First played in Christiania in 1883.

Argument: Adolph Sang, a minister in a little place in the mountains of Norway, who has gained a reputation for marvellous powers of healing, is confident that his supreme faith enables him to work the miracles upon which he holds that the Christian faith is postulated. He undertakes to cure his wife who has been prostrated by a mysterious illness, while the people of the neighborhood, gathered about the house, join in his prayers. Not the life of Clara Sang only, but the faith of the community and the clergy as well depend on the outcome.

In a poorly furnished room with walls of crudely dressed logs the pastor's wife, Clara Sang, lies in bed, facing the doorway. Her sister, Mrs. Hanna Roberts, is looking out of one of the windows. They speak of the rain, which is over. The day before Hanna heard an old man say it was dangerous weather, for things get loosened up in the mountains and there were likely to be landslides.

Clara. I thought of nothing else last night. We have had slide after slide here, you know. Once—well, that was before our time—the church was carried away.

Hanna. The church!

Clara. Not from where it is now. It stood farther away then.

Hanna. Is that why it has been placed right up against the garden wall?

Clara. Yes. And when they open up the church win-

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dows in the summer, as they have done now, I can lie here and hear Adolph singing at the altar.

Hanna is very sad, upon her return home from America, to find Clara in such a condition. Moreover, as the doctor lives a long way off and his visits seemed to do no good, they stopped having him. At that time Clara had not slept for a month, and now it is close to six weeks. The doctor gave her trouble an ugly-sounding name which Adolph did not repeat to her. It was her daughter, Rachel, who wrote to Hanna to tell her she should come. Clara did not write because America is so far away, and she believed nothing could help her. She is worn out. People who are being worn out are not capable of asking for help, she says, nor do they know how to resist.

Hanna. But before you had become worn out?

Clara. You do not know what you are talking of.

Hanna. Well, explain—if you can.

Clara. No, I cannot—not all at once—but by and by, perhaps.

Hanna. You didn't share his faith to begin with, did you? How strange that was! And was that one of the reasons?

Clara. No. Well, it's a long story! But it wasn't that. Our natures are so different—and yet it isn't that either. If Adolph had been like other men, ramping and raging—oh, then it would have been easy—I think! But long before he knew me, all his strength—and he has strength, I tell you!—had become absorbed by his work. It had turned into love and self-sacrifice. It had been made wholly and completely beautiful. What do you say to the fact that in our house a harsh word has never yet been heard? Nothing like a "scene" has ever occurred. And we shall soon have been married twenty-five years. He is constantly radiant as with the joy of the Sabbath, for to him the whole year is made up of Sundays.

Hanna. Heavens, how you do love him!

Clara. It is not enough to say that I love him. I don't *exist* without him. And then you talk of resistance? That is, at times I have had to when matters have been going too far beyond our power.

Hanna does not understand what she means by things going too far beyond their power. Clara says that also

she will explain later. But, she asks, who can resist what is all goodness, all sacrifice for others, all joy and happiness? And who can resist when his childlike faith and supernatural powers sweep everybody else along. Adolph, when he prays intently, gets what he prays for. To the whole country he is "the wonder worker." Hanna thinks that Adolph gives one a most wonderful impression of spirituality, as if he didn't belong here.

Clara. Do you know that sometimes I lie here completely tied up in a knot, with my legs drawn up to my chin almost—well, I don't dare to show you, for that might bring it on. And like that I sometimes lie for whole days together when he is away, utterly unable to stretch out my limbs. Oh, it's dreadful, I tell you! Once, when he was up in the mountains—oh, those journeys into the mountains!—I was lying here for eight—think of it, eight!—days in that state. And no sooner did he appear in the doorway so that *I* saw him and *he* saw me, than my arms and legs began to yield. And then he came up to me, and passed his hands over me, and in a moment I was lying as straight as I am now! And it is always like that—up they will come, up they will come! And the moment he enters the room it passes.

At least a hundred times, she says, sick people who really believed have got well when he came and prayed with them. Even sick people he couldn't reach and had to pray for from a distance got well. There is a minister's widow, almost a hundred years old, living there who had been paralyzed for fifteen years, and he cured her. Then there was the case of Ågot Florvågen, most remarkable of all, for she was dead as far as they could see. He held her hands in one of his and placed his other on her heart and she began to breathe again. His name has a glamour all over the country now such as never was heard of.

Hanna. Then I may also see this—what you speak of—while I am here?

Clara. As surely as I am lying here unable to raise myself an inch off the bed.

Hanna. But why shouldn't the miracle come to you also, Clara? Why hasn't he cured you long ago?

Clara [*after a pause*]. There's a special reason.

Hanna. But can't you tell me?

Clara. No—yes, I mean. But later—— You'll have to open a window again. It's getting close in here. More air, please!

Clara thinks that probably there is nothing more remarkable in their age than what her husband has done. In any other place it would have attracted a hundred times as much attention. When they came there Adolph brought a fortune with him, and he has given away almost everything. If she hadn't held him back they shouldn't have enough to live on to-day, and probably he would not be living. Not even the children would be spared. Open remonstrance would do no good. She is forced to invent subterfuges, something new each time, or he would see through them, and that brings her to despair.

There is only one sense which he lacks entirely: the sense of reality. He never sees anything but what he wants to see. He lives without regard for actual conditions of any kind, small or great. When the weather is such that the hardiest sailors will not venture out in a ship he wants to start off in a mere skiff, and perhaps with his own children in the stern. He can stand anything in the way of fatigue. He lives in a region of his own; for he is innocent through and through.

Hanna. How you do love him

Clara. Yes, it is the only thing that is left of me. This difficulty about the children finished me.

Hanna. The children?

Clara. They took harm from staying here. No regulation or discipline: it turned them topsy-turvy. Never any check on whatever was held right! Never any reasoning —only inspiration! They were already grown up and had learned nothing but to read and write. And how I fought to get them away from here! And then, for five years, to keep them over there and to get them some education! It took the last remnant of my strength. Now it is all over with me.

Clara doesn't want pity. She has had for companion the best man on earth, the noblest will in all mankind. In that way one does not live so long as otherwise, it is true. But one cannot have everything. Hanna exclaims that he has destroyed the rest of her. Clara replies that he

would have destroyed himself, too, had he been given the chance; he is always going beyond his power.

Hanna. Beyond his power? When he really works miracles? And comes out of everything unharmed?

Clara. Don't you think that the miracles also depend on the fact that he is going beyond his power?

Hanna. Now you scare me. What do you mean?

Clara. I mean that the prophets must have been like that. Those of the Jews as well as of the Pagans. In certain directions they were capable of more than we because they lacked so much in other directions. Yes, that's the way it has seemed to me.

Hanna is startled at the thought that Clara does not believe. Clara replies that she does not know how far she shares her husband's faith. She has been so harassed she has had no chance to make up her mind about it. Long ago she lost the power of dealing with large problems. She must do what she can. And so with her faith, too. More than that is beyond her power.

Hanna. But now as to your faith in his miracles—at bottom you don't believe in them at all.

Clara. What are you saying? There is nothing else in the world in which I believe so completely!

Hanna. When you don't dare let him go out in a storm—when you don't dare feel sure of getting back what he gives away, even if it be all you have left—then you don't believe in them.

All of us are full of contradictions—all but he, she says.

Clara. Listen—no, let's drop it. I am too tired. All I know is that if he wants to take the children's livelihood and give it to people that are bad and useless, or if he wants to start across the mountains in a fog, or put to sea in a storm—then—then I just throw myself across his path. I'll do anything I can think of, absolutely *anything*, to stop him! Suppose he should try to do something of that kind just now—I have not been able to stand on my feet in many a month—but then I could do it! Then I could! I am sure of it! At such moments *I* can also work miracles. For I love him and the children.

There is a long pause. Then the sick woman asks her sister to bathe her temples with eau de Cologne. Presently Sang comes in. He is filled with hope and joy by the

beauty and fragrance of the morning. He has a great plan which he means to keep secret no longer. Hitherto he has not been able to help Clara, he says, because she is self-willed, so he sent for the children to come home and pray with him. They will weave a prayer chain around her and will not cease their efforts until she is asleep. And then they will repeat it until she gets up and walks with them. The children were deeply stirred at hearing about it, he says; their faces went white. Hanna goes to have a peep at the children, who have overslept.

Sang tells his wife he knows she has sacrificed herself little by little, and not for the sake of faith but out of love alone. He wanted to speak to her to-day of his great love for her. When Hanna returns she says that the children were still asleep. Elias had thrown himself down all dressed the night before. Sang says he asked too much of the children, as he always does. He goes out.

Hanna has guessed what is the matter. Clara is trembling. The day before she saw something in the children's eyes. How they must have been struggling and suffering, she says, loving their father as they do. Elias comes in and throws himself on his knees beside his mother's bed, burying his face in her hands. She tells him she knows everything. He mustn't tell her; she can't bear it. Then she says she must hear how it happened that they lost their father's faith. Sang entering catches the last words.

Sang. Have you lost your faith?—my boy—— Have you lost your faith?

Hanna. Look at Clara—look at her!

Sang [*hurries over to the bed and puts his hands on* CLARA]. It'll stop! It won't come!—thank God!

Clara. It's—passing—but you must hold me.

Sang bends down and kisses her. He tells her she must not cry; she must be strong. She must remember how sorry the children have been. In their suffering and pain the children have wanted to spare them, and they must spare the children. He does not utter a word of bitterness. Their faith came too easily, he says, and perhaps this is the beginning of a faith that cannot be lost. Elias says that if he were to talk with his father for days he could not get to the bottom of it. His father asks what decided them.

Elias. I think I can tell in a few words. Rachel and I —we discovered that the Christians were not as you told us they should be.

Sang. But, children——

Elias. You sent us to the best ones you knew. And I do think them better than all the rest. But soon Rachel and I agreed on something, and she was the first to say it: there's only one real Christian, and that is father!

Elias says the Christianity of the others is a convention. They bow down to the established order, to institutions, customs, prejudices, economical conditions, and all sorts of things. They have picked out every loophole in the faith, so that they can make it fit in with whatever happens to be. Christianity is something that only one in a million can reach. He alone is a Christian who, from Jesus, has learned the secret of perfection and strives after it in everything.

Sang asks him if every one may not try to be a Christian without being called a bungler on that account. But Elias says that they ask for so little that their peace may not be disturbed. They do just what suits them. Or if they try really they overreach themselves. Rachel says that was the very thing that made her say to Elias: "If those ideals are so little suited to man's powers and conditions even at the present time, how can they have come from Him who is omniscient? Then they traced those ideals back and found them much older than Christianity.

Oriental and Greek dreamers proclaimed those ideals in a time of despair, answers Sang; a time when the best ones longed for nothing but to flee to some land of new birth—just to get away! As if that land of new birth, the millennium, were less true, he exclaims, for being an old, an immensely ancient Oriental dream! He has tried, as he thinks everybody should try, to show that Christianity is possible. To believe is to know that nothing is impossible to faith. This hour has been prepared. God wants to show them what is possible. It is not he who is speaking, but the great certainty that is within him.

Sang. I am going over to the church, children, because I want to be alone. I will not leave it again until, from the hands of the Lord, I have received sleep for your mother; and after the sleep, health, so that she may rise

up and walk among us. Be not afraid! I feel within me that he will grant it! He will not give it to me at once, for this time I have doubted. But I shall not give up—I shall wait for my Lord, who is stern and kind. Good-bye! [*He kneels over his wife in brief prayer.*] Good-bye! [*He kisses her; she does not move; he gets up.*] Thank you, children. Now you have helped me nevertheless. More than anybody could guess. Now I shall myself ring out the call to prayer. At the first sound of the bell you know that I have begun to pray for your mother. Peace be with you!

He goes out. Hanna, who has instinctively opened the door for him, bursts into tears. Elias, saying he must see him go into the church, follows his father. Presently the bell is heard.

Rachel [*sinks down on her knees; a little later she cries out, but in a subdued tone*]. My God—Hanna!

Hanna. What is it?

Rachel. Mother is asleep!

Hanna. She's asleep?

Rachel. Mother is asleep!

Hanna. Really——?

Rachel. I must find Elias. I must tell him about it! [*She goes out.*]

Hanna. She is sleeping like a child. O God!

She kneels down. Then a rumbling as of thunder is heard—prolonged, deepening, constantly deepening, growing more and more awesome; cries are heard outside; the house is trembling; and still the roar is increasing.

Rachel [*outside*]. The mountain is falling! [*Shrieks; comes running in.*] The mountain is falling right on the church! On us—on father—on us! It's rolling, it's roaring—it's like night—oh! [*She covers down and hides her face.*]

Elias [*outside*]. Father! Father! Oh!

Hanna [*beside the bed*]. Now it's coming! Now it's coming!

The roar is at its loudest; then it decreases little by little; then the bell is heard again.

Hanna [*leaping to her feet*]. It's still ringing! He's alive!

Rachel. He's alive!

Elias [*outside*]. Father is alive! [*Coming nearer.*] The church is still there! [*Comes in.*] The church is still there. Father is alive. Right in front of the church the tide turned aside—turned to the left. He's alive, he's ringing the bell—O God! [*He throws himself down beside the bed.*]

Rachel [*drawing nearer*]. Elias! Mother——?

Hanna. She's sleeping!

Elias [*jumps up*]. Is she sleeping?

Rachel. Yes, she's sleeping——

[*The bell continues to ring.*]

Hanna. She is sleeping just as quietly!

There is a small room, with walls made of logs, forming part of the church. A door at the rear, opening on a porch, discloses a view of a narrow landscape abruptly shut off by a bare mountainside. Chairs are placed along the walls of the room. Elias enters from the porch, moving quickly and restlessly. He stops and listens. A hymn sung by a man's voice is plainly heard. Elias is deeply moved. Rachel enters softly through a door on the right. Her brother tells her to look out of a window at the hundreds of people there, praying silently. More are coming constantly from miles away. There are many people in the groves at a little distance listening to lay preachers.

Over toward the shore the ground is black with people from a ship, which was taking them from the East to a big mission conference in the city. Pastor Kröyer boarded the ship and told those on board what had happened here, and all wanted to come ashore, although the bishop and the ministers begged them to go on. A sick man was brought to the church just as the pastor began to sing. It made every one burst into tears to hear him unexpectedly. And the sick man got up without help and was well.

Elias says their mother also will get up. Rachel believes so, too, but she trembles to think of it. Elias at times hears something that is not spoken. He feels a longing to plunge into some great danger, for he is certain he should come out of it unharmed. And yet he asks Rachel if it was a miracle that they have experienced there. He feels it is dreadful that the only two people still doubting are the pastor's own children. Rachel asks what will happen

when their mother has got up; it is a question of her life. She has no power of resistance left. And their father will go right on.

Elias. But suppose it be a miracle, Rachel? Why need we then be afraid?

Rachel. I cannot overlook the consequences—to mother and father—to all of us. You don't understand me at all.

Elias. No.

Rachel. No! But to me it does not matter what it is. It will destroy us. It will kill us in the end!

Elias. The miracle?

Rachel. Yes, yes! There is no blessing in it! A horror, that's what it is!—Elias!

A stranger comes up to the porch and searches the room with his eyes. Rachel goes back into the house. The stranger says that he has come from across the mountains. He saw the landslide from above. And this morning he saw the sick man get up when the pastor sang. He begs to stay and wait. This day, he says, will decide his whole life.

Pastor Kröyer asks for the use of the room for the bishop and ministers, who feel it necessary to discuss what attitude they are to take toward what is happening. They must try to look rationally at things. Elias goes out and the bishop and ministers enter. They were very seasick on the ship and are now nearly famished, but there is no food at hand. The bishop opens the discussion.

The bishop has always held the opinion that the minister should remain neutral toward any excitement of this kind, and neither affirm nor deny until the excitement has subsided. The older and more experienced one grows, he says, the more difficult it becomes to form a conviction, especially in regard to supernatural things. Pastor Blank states it as his opinion that apparent miracles are regulated by natural law. All they need do, he thinks, is to praise the Lord together with the congregation.

They cannot get out of the difficulty by singing hymns, the bishop returns. The others concur with him. They cannot understand what should prevent their acknowledging the miracle at once; they are accustomed to miracles in his congregation. Falk appears to be among the

more skeptical. Jensen is rather hard-headed. It has been Kröyer's experience repeatedly that none become more easily the prey of superstition than the very people that are the most sober-minded. He has grown to think that the craving for the supernatural has to such an extent become a heritage of man that if people resist it in one way it gets hold of them in another.

What Falk wishes to settle once for all is whether they are now to surrender what the Church has gained of clearness and order. It is all right to have a simple mind. He had it once himself. But when a minister in a big city goes from a funeral to a wedding, from there to a poverty-stricken deathbed, and then to dine at the Royal Palace, he becomes familiar with the infirmities of man. What he learns by it is to rely very little on man and very much on institutions. When the miracle appears, then all institutions perish in the revolt of the feelings. For this reason the Catholic Church has tried to make an institution of the miracle itself. He relates an anecdote of how he quieted a number of hysterical women by pouring water on them. Amid the laughter that the ministers with difficulty suppress, he adds that that is the most wholesome way: to pour water on it.

Kröyer's reply has the force of a rebuke. Falk, he says, would be the last to pour water on the minister's widow, now a hundred years old, or on the young girl whom Sang brought back from death. On such testimony, he declares, they must believe.

Kröyer. I know every one of you well enough to know that if you only *dared*—if you could feel sure of witnessing a miracle so great that it met the test once for all prescribed by the Bible: "All who saw it believed"—oh, no matter how far you may have fallen short at other times, then you would become as children, you would surrender yourselves completely, you would sacrifice the days still left to you—only to proclaim it! [*Considerable emotion is shown, especially by the older men.*] I dare to make these confessions on your behalf, my brethren, because my place is within the circle of the spirit—that circle of which it has been said: either within or without! Once within, and all the tricks prompted by our poverty will collapse of their own accord, and we shall dare to admit the truth!

What will be left of Christianity if we declare the miracle lost to the church?

The characteristic feature of Christianity, Falk maintains, is not the miracle but the belief in resurrection. But Kröyer replies that either Christianity is a life in the Lord that takes us beyond this world and all its precepts, or it is nothing at all. After talking long and fervently he sits down trembling and exhausted, unable to say all he would.

The Bishop. My dear Kröyer, the moment you came aboard this morning I saw that you were overworked and ill. But that's what happens to every follower of Pastor Sang.

The stranger has in the meantime opened the door in the rear and drawn nearer step by step. He asks to say a word. All turn toward him. The bishop recognizes him as Pastor Bratt. Bratt says he is a man in distress, coming to ask help of his brethren. He is in search of the miracle. Has he found it?

Bratt. With blighted hopes I have turned back from every spot in Europe where the miracle was thought to dwell. Here, of course, the faith is bigger and simpler; and the *man* is great. What I have seen here has taken hold of me with supernatural power. But the next moment doubt has returned. This is the curse that rests on me, you see. I have incurred it by seven years during which, as minister, I promised the miracle to those who would believe. I promised because thus it was written—although I myself doubted—for I had never seen it come to anybody that believed. For seven years I preached that in which I did not have faith myself—and each time the dark days returned. . . . Where is that miraculous power which Thou has promised Thy believers? [*He bursts into tears.*]

Bishop. Oh, you lay bare everything. And that is what you have always done.

Bratt. In binding words, each one stronger than the other, He has declared that whosoever will believe shall possess this power. Yes, the power of deeds greater even than those done by the Son of Man. What has become of that power? After eighteen hundred years of passionate laboring for the faith, is there not one who believes in such

measure that he can produce a miracle among us? Is the Lord's own promise not yet redeemed?

Religion no longer constitutes man's only ideal, he says. If it is to be the highest one it must be proved to be such. Man can live and die for what he loves—for his country, his family, his convictions. And as these things are the highest of all that exist within the limits of the natural, and as they want to show him something still higher—well, then they must pass those limits. All appear strongly moved.

Falk. Somewhere a scornful word is to be read about the race that will not believe without signs and wonders.

Bratt. And do you not know the answer of the race?—"We ask only for the signs promised by the Lord himself—promised to whosoever will believe. Or is there not yet a single one among you that really believes? What then do you want of us?"—Yes, that's what the race answers. But offer a miracle to that same race—one that cannot be picked to pieces by the sharpest tools ever shaped by doubt—one of which it can be said: "all that saw it believed"—and then you may yet be witness of the fact that not the faculty of belief is lacking, but the miracle.

There is a stir among the ministers. Bratt goes on to say that they need not put a premium on credulity. The danger lies in the opposite direction; for lack of what is genuine men put their faith in what is false. Several of the ministers reply in subdued voices that that is true. He concludes a long and ardent outpouring of his soul with a cry to God that now comes the final test. The bishop calls out to him in a tone of protest, "Bratt! Bratt!" But he insists it is the final test; further struggle is beyond his strength. He will resign from the ministry, resign from the Church and from the faith—if, if, if—— [*He bursts into tears again.*]

Bratt asks the ministers to help him pray, for if the miracle be not there it cannot be anywhere. This man, he says, is more than other men; there is no stronger faith than his. He has at last aroused emotion in all his hearers.

Bratt. There can be none on whom grace has been more richly bestowed; then we, unworthy ones, must be especially chosen! And as I look out upon this hemmed-in, barren land of the fiords, with the screaming gulls over-

head, and as the thought comes to me, that the Kingdom of God began in the luxuriant regions of countries steeped in sun, through which ran the highroads of the world: what a proof it would be to see it resumed in all its grandeur in a poverty-stricken, outlying corner like this, on the edge of the everlasting ice——

Falk [*gets up, pale as death, and whispers*]. Yes, yes!

Several. Yes, yes!

Bratt. Then it seems to me that everything fits together and that the miracle *must* come.

All are now on their feet.

Bishop [*in a low voice*]. Oh, that it would come, so that I might see it in my old age!

Blank. Yes, if only the great faith would seize us! Not because we have deserved to see, but because we need it!

He falls on his knees. Others follow his example.

Bratt. Because the whole race needs it! More than at any other time. Because it has been promised. Because here it must be if it be anywhere. [*He kneels.*] His faith must be able to reach it! There is no greater faith than his on earth! And faith can do it! Oh, it can!

All. It can, it can!

Bratt. If it couldn't there would be no truth in all the rest either. Then there would be something excessive in all of it—something beyond our power——

Rachel [*in a scared voice from the room on the right*]. Elias!

Immediately afterward she enters and runs across the room to the window, which she flings open, as she cries out with all her might, "Elias!" Thereupon she throws herself backward so that she would fall if she were not caught by Kröyer. She bursts into violent weeping, but struggles to her feet again and points toward the other room in evident terror.

Rachel. There! In there! She is no longer alone!—See—don't you see!

All have risen. At that moment Elias appears on the porch. As she catches sight of him Rachel tears herself loose from Kröyer and runs to meet her brother, crying, "Mother! Mother!"

Elias. Has she risen?

Rachel. Yes, yes.

Elias. And she walks?

Rachel. Yes! But she is not alone!

Elias. This must be told!

Rachel. But not to father!

Elias. No—from the roof, from the belfry—it must be rung out to the whole world! [*He runs out.*]

Rachel. But you have no ladder! [*As he fails to reply, she repeats in alarm.*] You have no ladder, don't you hear?

Kröyer makes a silencing gesture and says, "Hush!"

Bishop [*whispering*]. Oh, listen!

Sang [*heard singing in the church*].

Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia!

All [*kneel down, whispering*]. He knows it! He knows it!

At that moment Clara appears in a white nightdress; her eyes are turned toward the church; she stops and reaches out her arms as if to meet the song.

All the Ministers [*singing very softly*].

Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia!

Rachel [*in the porch*]. Now father is at the church door.

Sang [*his voice is now heard strong and clear*].

Alleluia, alleluia!
Alleluia, alleluia!

The church bell begins to ring, and all the people outside join in the singing. There is a triumphant force in their song as if it sprang from a thousand throats. It is increasing in strength, for the people who were in the groves come running to join those at the church. For a while it seems as if the "alleluias" would lift the house off its foundations.

Sang appears in the doorway. His face is lighted up by the rays of the evening sun. All rise and fall back. He holds out both arms toward Clara, who is standing in the middle of the room. Her arms are stretched out in response. All around them the song is pouring forth. The room is full of people, and so is the porch; some have climbed up on the shoulders of those in front of them, and others are standing on the window sill.

Then Clara collapses in her husband's arms. The song dies out. Only the bell is still heard. Clara makes an

effort to rise up again, but succeeds only in raising her head so that her eyes can meet his.

Clara. Light flowed from you—when you came—oh, my beloved!

Her head sinks back, her arms lose their hold, her entire body collapses.

Sang [*still holding her, puts a hand over her heart; then he bends over her body in surprise. Finally he looks up toward the sky, saying with childlike innocence*]. But this was not the meaning of it——? [*He sinks down on one knee and puts* CLARA'S *head on the other; once more he searches for signs of life; then he lets the body gently sink to the floor; and rising to his feet, he looks up again as he says.*] But this was not the meaning of it——? Or——? Or——?

He puts his hand to his heart and sinks down on the floor. Rachel has been standing as if turned to stone; now a wild cry breaks from her lips as she sinks on her knees beside the bodies of her parents.

Kröyer. What did he mean—by that word—"or"——?

Bratt. I don't know with certainty. But it killed him.

Rachel. Dead? It is impossible!

The bell continues to ring.

THE POWER OF DARKNESS*

By Leo Tolstoy

Written in 1886, but not played until some years later.

Argument: Nikíta, a young farm hand, is loved by the wife of his well-to-do employer, and controlled by her and by his mother, who persuades the other woman to poison her husband, he refuses to marry an orphan whom he has seduced and really loves. By the time Nikíta succeeds to the wife and property of the farmer he is involved with the farmer's daughter, and his mother and wife force him to murder the baby which the girl bears in order that she may be foisted upon a suitor. The question of whether this plan succeeds is of subordinate interest to that of the extent to which poetic justice is fulfilled.

It never seems possible for Nikíta Akímitch to oppose the will of his parents. His father, Akím, who is an earnest God-fearing peasant, insists upon his marrying Marína, the orphan girl who was his sweetheart when he worked at the railway. His mother, on the other hand, Matryóna, cares nothing whatever about making amends. She has seen enough of hardship to consider the merits of a situation from her own point of view. There is a chance for Nikíta to come into a good deal of property by a different sort of match, if his employer, Peter Ignátitch, should happen to die. Matryóna desires to arrive at an understanding with Peter's wife, Anísya.

Anísya. What's it all about then? Do you really wish him to get married?

Matryóna. Eh, why should he marry, my jewel? It's all nonsense, all my old man's drivel. "Marry, marry." But he's reckoning without his host. You know the

*Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude. Published by Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York.

saying, "From oats and hay, why should horses stray?" When you've enough and to spare, why look elsewhere? And so in this case. [*Winks.*] Don't I see which way the wind blows?

Anís. Where's the good of my pretending to you, Mother Matryóna? You know all about it. I have sinned. I love your son.

Mat. Dear me, here's news! D'you think Mother Matryóna didn't know? Eh, lassie—Mother Matryóna's been ground, and ground again, ground fine! This much I can tell you, my jewel: Mother Matryóna can see through a brick wall three feet thick. I know it all, my jewel! I know what young wives need sleeping draughts for, so I've brought some along. [*Unties a knot in her handkerchief and brings out paper packets.*] As much as is wanted, I see, and what's not wanted I neither see nor perceive! There! Mother Matryóna has also been young. I had to know a thing or two to live with my old fool. I know seventy-and-seven dodges. But I see your old man's quite seedy, quite seedy! How's one to live with such as him? Why, if you pricked him with a hay fork it wouldn't fetch blood. See if you don't bury him before the spring. Then you'll need some one in the house. Well, what's wrong with my son? He'll do as well as another. Then where's the advantage of my taking him away from a good place? Am I my child's enemy?

Anís. Oh, if only he does not go away.

Mat. He won't go away, birdie. It's all nonsense. You know my old man. His wits are always wool-gathering; yet sometimes he takes a thing into his pate, and it's as if it were wedged in, you can't knock it out with a hammer.

Anís. And what started this business?

Mat. Well, you see, my jewel, you yourself know what a fellow with women the lad is—and he's handsome, too, though I say it as shouldn't. Well, you know, he was living at the railway, and they had an orphan wench there to cook for them. Well, that same wench took to running after him.

Anís. Marína?

Mat. Yes, the plague seize her!

When Anísya heard that Nikíta was going to marry the

girl, it was as if a knife had gone right through her heart. She feared he loved Marína. Matryóna assures her that there is no danger of the boy caring for a homeless baggage like that. He is a sensible fellow. He knows where to love, and he shall stay right where he is if Anísya will only oblige them with a little money.

Anís. All I know is, that I could not live if Nikíta went away.

Mat. Naturally, when one's young it's no easy matter! You, a wench in full bloom, to be living with the dregs of a man like that husband of yours.

Anís. Mother Matryóna, would you believe it? I'm that sick of him, that sick of this long-nosed cur of mine, I can hardly bear to look at him.

Mat. Yes, I see, it's one of them cases. Just look here —[*looks round and whispers*]—I've been to see that old man, you know—he's given me simples of two kinds. This, you see, is a sleeping draught. "Just give him one of these powders," he says, "and he'll sleep so sound you might jump on him!" And this here, "This is that kind of simple," he says, "that if you give one some of it to drink it has no smell whatever, but its strength is very great. There are seven doses here, a pinch at a time. Give him seven pinches," he says, "and she won't have far to look for freedom," he says.

Akím is for doing things the right way, God's way, and enters into a long, fruitless argument with his wife. He is hampered by a hesitating manner of speech, due apparently to difficulty in finding his words, for the want of which he is continually using such expressions as "what d'ye call it." Nikíta, catechised by his father, gives evasive answers, but finally gets angry and declares Marína deserves no consideration. Opposed by everybody, Akím abandons the struggle.

Nikíta is left alone in the large room of the hut. Akoulína, a girl of sixteen, Peter's daughter by his first wife, enters. She is hard of hearing and mentally undeveloped. It is getting dark and she asks Nikíta why he did not get a light.

Nikíta. What, to look at you? I can see you well enough without

Akoulína. Oh, bother you!

Nan, the ten-year-old daughter of Peter and Anísya, comes in to tell Nikíta there is some one asking for him.

Nik. What person?

Nan. Marína from the railway; she's out there, round the corner.

Nik. Nonsense!

Nan. Blest if she isn't!

Nik. What does she want?

Nan. She wants you to come out. She says, "I only want to say a word to Nikíta." I began asking, but she won't tell, but only says, "Is it true he's leaving you?" And I say, "No, only his father wanted to take him away and get him to marry, but he won't, and is going to stay with us another year." And she says, "For goodness' sake send him out to me. I must see him," she says, "I must say a word to him somehow." She's been waiting a long time. Why don't you go?

Nikíta says he will wait a bit and she will go away, but Nan sees Marína coming to the door. She goes out and Marína enters.

Marína. What are you doing with me?

Nik. Doing? I'm not doing anything.

Mar. You mean to desert me.

Nik. [*gets up angrily*]. What does this look like, your coming here?

Mar. Oh, Nikíta!

Nik. Well, you are strange! What have you come for?

Mar. Nikíta!

Nik. That's my name. What do you want with Nikíta? Well, what next? Go away, I tell you!

Mar. I see, you do want to throw me over.

Nik. Well, and what's there to remember? You yourself don't know. When you stood out there round the corner and sent Nan for me, and I didn't come, wasn't it plain enough that you're not wanted? It seems pretty simple. So there—go!

Mar. Not wanted! So now I'm not wanted! I believed you when you said you would love me. And now that you've ruined me, I'm not wanted.

Nik. Where's the good of talking? This is quite improper. You've been telling tales to father. Now, do go away, will you?

Mar. You know yourself I never loved any one but you. Whether you married me or not, I'd not have been angry. I've done you no wrong, then why have you left off caring for me? Why?

Nik. Where's the use of baying at the moon? You go away. Goodness me! what a duffer!

Mar. It's not that you deceived me when you promised to marry me that hurts, but that you've left off loving. No, it's not that you've stopped loving me either, but that you've changed me for another, that's what hurts. I know who it is!

Nik. [*comes up to her viciously*]. Eh! what's the good of talking to the likes of you that won't listen to reason? Be off, or you'll drive me to do something you'll be sorry for.

Mar. What, will you strike me, then? Well, then, strike me! What are you turning away for? Ah, Nikíta!

Nik. Supposing some one came in. Of course, it's quite improper. And what's the good of talking?

Mar. So this is the end of it! What has been has flown. You want me to forget it? Well, then, Nikíta, listen. I kept my maiden honor as the apple of my eye. You have ruined me for nothing, you have deceived me. You have no pity on a fatherless and motherless girl! [*Weeping.*] You have deserted, you have killed me, but I bear you no malice. God forgive you! If you find a better one you'll forget me, if a worse one you'll remember me. Yes, you will remember Nikíta! Good-bye, then, if it is to be. Oh, how I loved you! Good-bye for the last time. [*Takes his head in her hands and tries to kiss him.*]

Nik. [*tossing his head back*]. I'm not going to talk with the likes of you. If you won't go away I will, and you may stay here by yourself.

Mar. [*screams*]. You are a brute. [*In the doorway.*] God will give you no joy. [*Exit, crying.*

Akou. [*comes out of closet*]. You're a dog, Nikíta!

Nik. What's up?

Akou. What a cry she gave! [*Cries.*]

Nik. What's up with you?

Akou. What's up? You've hurt her so. That's the way you'll hurt me also. You're a dog. [*Exit into closet.*

[*Silence.*]

Nik. Here's a fine muddle. I'm as sweet as honey on the lasses, but when a fellow's sinned with 'em it's a bad look-out!

Six months later spring has come. Anísya is beating hemp before the door of the log hut. She is very much puzzled and exasperated at not being able to find her husband's hoard. Akoulína runs out. Her father says he is going to die, and has told her to go and get his sister Martha.

Anísya will not let her go, but tells her to finish the wash at the river, and that she will go herself. As Matryóna comes along, Anísya exclaims that God has sent the right guest at the right time. Matryóna inquires at once if Peter is still alive, and where the money is. Anísya tells her the money is hidden; she cannot find it with Akoulína spying on her all the time. She has asked Nikíta to do something about it, but he is afraid of the job.

Matryóna whispers a question. Has Anísya given him the strong tea? Just then a neighbor comes along and tells Anísya that her old man is calling her. Anísya replies indifferently that that is the way he coughs, just as if he were screaming.

They gossip about one thing and another. Simon Matvéyitch has married that Marína. He had four children to take care of. No decent girl would have had him. The couple seem to get on pretty well. When the neighbor has gone on Matryóna repeats her question, whispering again.

Mat. I say, did you give him the tea?

Anís. Don't speak about it. He'd better die of himself. It's no use—he doesn't die, and I have only taken a sin on my soul. O-oh, my head, my head! Oh, why did you give me those powders?

Mat. What of the powders? The sleeping powders, lass—why not give them? No evil can come of them.

Anís. I am not talking of the sleeping ones, but the others, the white ones.

Mat. Well, honey, those powders are medicinal.

Anís. [*sighs*]. I know, yet it's frightening. Though he's worried me to death.

Mat. Well, and did you use many?

Anís. I gave two doses.

Mat. Was anything noticeable?

Anís. I had a taste of the tea myself—just a little bitter. And he drank them with the tea and says, "Even tea disgusts me," and I say, "Everything tastes bitter when one's sick." But I felt that scared, mother.

Mat. Don't go thinking about it. The more one thinks the worse it is.

Anís. I wish you'd never given them to me and led me into sin. When I think of it something seems to tear my heart. Oh, dear, why did you give them to me?

Mat. What do you mean, honey? Lord help you! Why are you turning it on to me? Mind, lass, don't go twisting matters from the sick on to the healthy. If anything were to happen, I stand aside! I know nothing! I'm aware of nothing! I'll kiss the cross on it; I never gave you any kind of powders, never saw any, never heard of any, and never knew there were such powders. You think about yourself, lass. Why, we were talking about you the other day. "Poor thing, what torture she endures. The stepdaughter an idiot; the old man rotten, sucking her life blood. What wouldn't one be ready to do in such a case!"

Anís. I'm not going to deny it. A life such as mine could make one do worse than that. It could make you hang yourself or throttle him. Is this a life?

Mat. That's just it. There's no time to stand gaping; the money must be found one way or other, and then he must have his tea.

Anís. O-oh, my head, my head! I can't think what to do. I am so frightened; he'd better die of himself. I don't want to have it on my soul.

Matryóna asks viciously why he doesn't show the money. Does he mean to take it along with him? She tells Anísya to light the samovar before she goes for Martha. They will give him some tea, and then they will find the money. She stops, horror-struck, as Peter appears in the doorway. Holding on to the wall, he creeps out into the porch and calls with a faint voice.

Peter. How's it one can't make you hear? Oh, oh, Anísya! Who's there? [*He drops on the bench.*]

Anís. [*steps from behind the corner*]. Why have you

come out? You should have stayed where you were lying.

Peter. Has the girl gone for Martha? It's very hard. . . . Oh, if only death would come quicker!

Anís. She had no time. I sent her to the river. Wait a bit, I'll go myself when I'm ready.

Peter. Send Nan. Where's she? Oh, I'm that bad! Oh, death's at hand!

Anís. I've sent for her already.

Peter. Oh, dear! Then where is she?

Anís. Where's she got to, the plague seize her!

Peter. Oh, dear! I can't bear it. All my inside's on fire. It's as if a gimlet were boring me. Why have you left me as if I were a dog? . . . no one to give me a drink. . . . Oh . . . send Nan to me.

Anís. Here she is. Nan, go to father.

NAN *runs in.* ANÍSYA *goes behind the corner of the house.*

Peter. Go you. Oh . . . to Aunt Martha, tell her father wants her; say she's to come, I want her.

Nan. All right.

Peter. Wait a bit. Tell her she's to come quick. Tell her I'm dying. O-oh!

As soon as the child is off the old woman tells Anísya to go into the hut quickly and look everywhere, like a dog hunting for fleas. She will undertake to search Peter himself. Matryóna says to Peter that she will go in to light the samovar and make a cup of tea for Mother Matryóna.

Matryóna tells Peter reassuringly that he shall have a good burial, and have prayers said for his soul. But Peter is worried to think that there will be no one to manage things. His wife's head is full of folly. He knows all about it, he assures Matryóna, and his girl is silly and young. He has got the homestead together, and there's no one to attend to things. One can't help feeling it, he says, whimpering.

Anísya comes out and makes a sign that she could not find the money. Matryóna sends her to the woodshed, telling her to rummage for all she is worth, all over everywhere, as if licking with her tongue. She asks if the samovar is ready. It is just on the boil.

Nikíta comes to the gate as Matryóna is helping Peter

up to go inside. Peter stops and speaks to him. Nikíta asks angrily what he wants.

Peter. I shan't see you again . . . I'll die to-day. . . . Forgive me,* for Christ's sake, forgive me if I have ever sinned against you . . . if I have sinned in word or deed . . . there's been all sorts of things. Forgive me!

Nik. What's there to forgive? I'm a sinner myself.

Mat. Ah, sonnie, have some feeling.

Peter. Forgive me, for Christ's sake. [*Weeps.*]

Nik. [*snivels*]. God will forgive you, Daddy Peter. I have no cause to complain of you. You've never done me any wrong. You forgive me; maybe I've sinned worse against you. [*Weeps.*]

[PETER *goes in whimpering*, MATRYÓNA *supporting him.*]

Anísya tells Nikíta that the money was not under the floor, as he said it was, and implores him to help her search, saying that Peter has sent for his sister and wants to give it to her. If that happens they will be turned out of the house. Nikíta stubbornly refuses to have a hand in the business.

Matryóna comes out of the hut again and down the steps to where they are standing and tells them he has got the money on him, sure enough; she felt it on a string around his neck. If they are not wide awake, then they may whistle for it. The samovar is boiling, too, and Anísya must go and make the tea at once. Matryóna whispers to her.

Nan returns and reports that Martha is on the way.

Anís. Coming! What shall we do?

Mat. There's plenty of time if you do as I tell you.

Anís. I don't know what to do; I know nothing, my brain's all in a whirl. Nan! Go, daughter, and see to the calves, they'll have run away I'm afraid. . . . Oh, dear, I haven't the courage.

Mat. Go on! I should think the samovar's boiling over.

While Anísya is in the house Matryóna tells Nikíta

*A formal request for forgiveness is customary among Russians, but it is often no mere formality. Nikíta's first reply is evasive; his second reply, "God will forgive you," is the correct one sanctioned by custom.

that she has got advice on how to act in order to get hold of the homestead by marrying the widow. The daughters must be given in marriage, and the whole job will mean a great deal of trouble. But it can be done if there is money. Then, if he has his hooks on the money, any time the woman turns snappish he can control her.

Anísya runs out of the hut, very pale, holding something under her apron. She says she has got it, and Matryóna tells her to give it to Nikíta to hide. Anísya wants to hide it herself, but Matryóna seizes her by the arm and tells her she will be missed when Martha comes. Anísya is irresolute. Just then Akoulína appears, carrying the clothes from the wash, and Anísya turns over the money to Nikíta, who starts off at once.

Anís. [*stands in terror*]. Oh, dear, and supposing he . . .

Mat. Well, is he dead?

Anís. Yes, he seems dead. He did not move when I took it.

Mat. Go in, there's Akoulína.

Anís. Well, there, I've done the sin and he has the money . . .

Mat. Have done and go in! There's Martha coming!

Anís. There, now, I've trusted him. What's going to happen now?

Nine months have passed. It is winter. Anísya sits before a loom weaving. Nikíta has gone to town and taken Akoulína with him. She got herself up very fine for the occasion in a velveteen coat and French shawl. Even the neighbors have taken notice of the excursion. A woman who has come in asks if there is not some one wooing Akoulína. Anísya replies that there was, but the thing fell through because of the talk going around. The same thing has happened in two cases in fact. Anísya is impatient enough to get the girl out of the house, but he does not wish it, nor she either. The neighbor is scandalized at this state of affairs.

That is not the worst of it, Anísya says. He has a terrible temper when he has been drinking and is ready to trample her under his feet. The girl, too, is worse than a serpent. Akoulína declares she is the mistress, that the

house is hers, and that it was she her father wanted Nikíta to marry.

Neighbor. Oh, dear, what a life yours is, now I come to look at you. And yet there's people envying you: "They're rich," they say; but it seems that gold don't keep tears from falling.

Anís. Much reason for envy, indeed! And the riches, too, will soon be made ducks and drakes of. Dear me, how he squanders money!

Neighbor. But how's it, dear, you've been so simple to give up the money? It's yours.

Anís. Ah, if you knew all! The thing is that I've made one little mistake.

Akím comes to the house. He has some business with his son. His horse is done for and he needs money for another.

Akím [*to* ANÍSYA]. And Nikíta—has he what d'you call it, taken anything up to town? I mean, anything to sell?

Anís. [*laying the table and serving up*]. No, he's taken nothing. He's gone to get money from the bank.

Akím [*sitting down to supper*]. Why? D'you wish to put it to another use, the money I mean?

Anís. No, we don't touch it. Only some twenty or thirty rûbles as have come due; they must be taken.

Akím. Must be taken. Why take it, the money I mean? You'll take some to-day I mean, and some to-morrow; and so you'll what d'you call it, take it all, I mean.

Anís. We get this besides. The money is all safe.

Akím. All safe? How's that, safe? You take it, and it what d'you call it, it's all safe. How's that? You put a heap of meal into a bin, or a barn, I mean, and go on taking meal, will it remain there what d'you call it, all safe I mean? That's, what d'you call it, it's cheating. You'd better find out, or else they'll cheat you. Safe indeed! I mean you what d'ye call . . . you take it and it remains all safe there?

Anís. I know nothing about it. Iván Moséitch advised us at the time. "Put the money in the bank," he said, "the money will be safe and you'll get interest," he said.

Mítritch [*having finished his supper*]. That's so. I've

lived with a tradesman. They all do like that. Put the money in the bank, then lie down on the oven and it will keep coming in.

Akím. That's queer talk. How's that—what d'ye call, coming in, how's that coming in, and they, who do they get it from I mean, the money I mean?

Anís. They take the money out of the bank.

Mít. Get along! 'Tain't a thing a woman can understand! You look here, I'll make it all clear to you.

Mítritch, the laborer, explains payment for the use of money. Akím thinks it dishonest, and that men would not do such things unless they had forgotten God. When people do not know how to make use of money themselves, pursues Mítrich, they take it to the bank and there it is used to fleece the people.

Nan comes in and says that a neighbor who has come back from the town saw Nikíta at the inn and he was as drunk as could be.

Anís. And is Marína living well?

Akím. Yes, she's living all right. The little woman is what d'ye call it, clever and steady; she's living, and what d'ye call it, doing her best. She's all right; the little woman's of the right sort I mean; painstaking and what d'ye call it, submissive; the little woman's all right I mean, all right, you know.

Anís. And is there no talk in your village that a relative of Marína's husband thinks of marrying our Akoulína? Have you heard nothing of it?

Akím. Ah; that's Mirónof. Yes, the women did chatter something. But I didn't pay heed, you know. It don't interest me I mean, I don't know anything. Yes, the old women did say something, but I've a bad memory, bad memory, I mean. But the Mirónofs are what d'ye call it, they're all right, I mean they're all right.

Anís. I'm that impatient to get her settled.

At last Nikíta arrives in a maudlin condition. Before he will come into the house he makes his wife give his name in full and say which foot he shall put across the threshold first. He remembers that his father wants money for a horse and gives him a ten-rûble note, but Akím says he will not take the money as Nikíta is not himself. Nikíta puts the money into his father's hand.

Akoulína is loaded with presents which Nikíta has bought her. The sight of them sends Anísya into a fury, and she throws Akoulína's shawl on the floor. In an effort to pacify her, Nikíta shows her a parcel, saying he has not forgotten her, but that she must earn her present before she gets it.

Anís. Enough of your humbug. I'm not afraid of you. Whose money are you spreeing on and buying your fat wench presents with? Mine!

Akou. Yours, indeed? No fear! You wished to steal it, but it did not come off! Get out of the way! [*Pushes her while trying to pass.*]

Anís. What are you shoving for? I'll teach you to shove!

Akou. Shove me? You try! [*Presses against* ANÍSYA].

Nik. Now, then, now, then, you women. Have done now! [*Steps between them.*]

Akou. Comes shoving herself in! You ought to keep quiet and remember your doings' You think no one knows!

Anís. Knows what? Out with it, out with it! What do they know?

Akou. I know something about you!

Anís. You're a slut who goes with another's husband!

Akou. And you did yours to death!

Anís. [*throwing herself on* AKOULÍNA]. You're raving!

Nik. [*holding her back*]. Anísya, you seem to have forgotten!

Anís. Want to frighten me! I'm not afraid of you!

Nik. [*turns* ANÍSYA *round and pushes her out*]. Be off!

Anís. Where am I to go? I'll not go out of my own house!

Nik. Be off, I tell you, and don't dare to come in here!

Anís. I won't go! [NIKÍTA *pushes her,* ANÍSYA *cries and screams and clings to the door.*] What! am I to be turned out of my own house by the scruff of the neck? What are you doing, you scoundrel? Do you think there's no law for you? You wait a bit!

Nikíta pushes her out. She cries out that she is going to hang herself. Akoulína says Nikíta should have sent the woman to the devil in the first place. She has no claim to the property, and, furthermore, she is a murderess.

Akoulína declares she will turn Anísya out of the house. Nikíta is unconcerned. He sings a song and tells Akoulína to get the tea things. Finally he lets Anísya in to fetch the samovar, and gives her the present.

Akím prepares to go. He tells Nikíta to take his money back, and puts it down by him. Nikíta does not see it, but protests at his father's going at such a time of night. Akím will not stay in the house. He says his son is leading a bad life and is on the road to ruin.

Akím. I told you, what d'ye call it, I told you about the orphan lass. That you had wronged an orphan—Marína, I mean, wronged her!

Nik. Eh! he's at it again. Let bygones be bygones. . . . All that's past!

Akím [*excited*]. Past! No, lad, it's not past. Sin, I mean, fastens on to sin—drags sin after it, and you've stuck fast, Nikíta, fast in sin! Stuck fast in sin! I see you're fast in sin. Stuck fast, sunk in sin, I mean!

Nik. Sit down and drink your tea, and have done with it!

Akím. I can't, I mean can't what d'ye call it, can't drink tea. Because of your filth, I mean; I feel what d'ye call it, I feel sick, very sick! I can't what d'ye call it, I can't drink tea with you.

Nik. Eh! There he goes rambling! Come to the table.

Akím. You're in your riches same as in a net—you're in a net, I mean. Ah, Nikíta, it's the soul that God needs!

At last Nikíta becomes angry. He is living without his father's help, he says; it is his father who comes to him for assistance. Akím replies that he would go begging before he would take his son's money. Nikíta tries to hold him.

Akím [*shrieks*]. Let go! I'll not stay. I'd rather sleep under some fence than in the midst of your filth! Faugh! God forgive me! [*Exit.*

Presently Akím opens the door again, puts his head in, and adjures his son to come to his senses, saying it is the soul that God wants. All are silent when the door has closed again.

Mít. [*roars out*]. O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!

They start. Nikíta says it is dull, deadly dull. He lies down sobbing, and tells them to put out the light.

The harvest moon shines on the interior of the farm courtyard. At the back is the rear of the hut with its porch. There is a shed on the left. The sound of tipsy voices and shouts are heard from the hut. The revelry means that a suitor of Akoulína has come with his family. She is confined to her bed in a condition that would compromise her if the company were not drunk, and it is explained that she has been bewitched by an evil eye.

The guests are not inquisitive, being interested chiefly in the dowry. The suitor's father, however, requires some reassuring, and Anísya comes out with him into the courtyard. Nan runs forward and waits for a chance to speak to her mother.

Nan. She's gone into the barn. It's awful what she's doing there! I'm blest! "I can't bear it," she says. "I'll scream," she says, "I'll scream out loud." Blest if she didn't.

Anís. She'll have to wait. We'll see our visitors off first.

Nan. Oh, mother! She's so bad! And she's angry, too. "What's the good of their drinking my health?" she says. "I shan't marry," she says. "I shall die," she says. Mother, supposing she does die! It's awful. I'm so frightened!

Anís. No fear, she'll not die. But don't you go near her. Come along.

Nikíta and Mítritch meet in the courtyard as the guests are leaving from the front of the house.

Mít. It's a fine mess. But there's the Foundlings' for that sort of thing. Whoever likes may drop one there; they'll take 'em all. Give 'em as many as you like, they ask no questions, and even pay—if the mother goes in as a wet nurse. It's easy enough nowadays.

Nik. But mind, Mítritch, don't go blabbing.

Mít. It's no concern of mine. Cover the tracks as you think best. Dear me, how you smell of liquor! I'll go in. Oh, Lord! [*Exit yawning.*

Anísya finds Nikíta sitting on a sledge and tells him to go down in the cellar and dig a hole. He wants to manage

some other way, but she mocks at him and says he should have thought of that a year ago. Matryóna comes up to them with a lantern and a spade.

Nik. What do you mean to do?

Mat. We know what to do. You do your share!

Nik. You'll be getting me into a mess!

Mat. What? You're not thinking of backing out, are you? Now it's come to this, and you back out!

Nik. Think what a thing it would be! It's a living soul.

Mat. A living soul indeed! Why, it's more dead than alive. And what's one to do with it? Go and take it to the Foundlings'—it will die just the same, and the rumor will get about, and people will talk, and the girl be left on our hands.

Nik. And supposing it's found out?

Mat. Not manage to do it in one's own house? We'll manage it so that no one will have an inkling. Only do as I tell you. We women can't do it without a man. There, take the spade, and get it done there—I'll hold the light.

Nik. What am I to get done?

Mat. [*in a low voice*]. Dig a hole; then we'll bring it out and get it out of the way in a trice! There, she's calling again. Now, then, get in, and I'll go.

Nik. Is it dead then?

Mat. Of course it is. Only you must be quick, or else people will notice! They'll see or they'll hear! The rascals must needs know everything. And the policeman went by this evening. Well, then, you see—[*gives him the spade*]—you get down into the cellar and dig a hole right in the corner; the earth is soft there, and you'll smooth it over. Mother earth will not blab to any one; she'll keep it close. Go, then; go, dear.

Nik. You'll get me into a mess, bother you! I'll go away! You do it alone as best you can!

Anís. [*through the doorway*]. Well? Has he dug it?

Anísya is angry to find that Nikíta holds back. She declares that she will go to the police and tell them everything, that he took the money, knowing that Peter was murdered. He takes the spade from Matryóna but shrinks from the task. She threatens to call the neighbors, and gives a shout. Matryóna, putting her hand over Anísya's mouth, coaxes Nikíta and at last he goes toward the cellar.

If he knows how to amuse himself, says his mother, he must know how to hide the consequences.

Anís. [*still excited*]. He's trampled on me . . . he and his slut! But it's enough! I'm not going to be the only one! Let him be a murderer, too! Then he'll know how it feels!

Mat. There, there! How she flares up! Don't you be cross, lass, but do things quietly little by little, as it's best. You go to the girl and he'll do the work. [*She follows* NIKÍTA *to the cellar with the lantern.*]

Anís. And I'll make him strangle his dirty brat! [*Still excited.*] I've worried myself to death all alone, with Peter's bones weighing on my mind! Let him feel it, too! I'll not spare myself!

Nik. [*from the cellar*]. Show a light!

Mat. [*holding up the lantern. To* ANÍSYA]. He's digging. Go and bring it.

Anís. You stay with him, or he'll go away, the wretch! And I'll go and bring it.

Mat. Mind, don't forget to baptize it, or I will if you like. Have you a cross?

Anís. I'll find one. I know how to do it. [*Exit.*

Presently Anísya brings out a baby wrapped in rags. She says that she has baptized it, but that it was all she could do to get it away from Akoulína, who wouldn't give it up. She offers it to Nikíta, who won't take it and so she throws it at him. He catches it and cries out in horror that it is alive. Anísya snatches the baby again and throws it down in the cellar.

Anís. Be quick and smother it, and then it won't be alive! [*Pushes* NIKÍTA *down.*] It's your doing, and you must finish it.

Mat. [*sits on the doorstep of the hut*]. He's tender-hearted. It's hard on him, poor dear. Well, what of that? Isn't it also his sin?

[ANÍSYA *stands by the cellar.*]

Mat. [*sits looking at her and discourses*]. Oh, oh, oh! How frightened he was: well, but what of that? It *is* hard, it's the only thing to be done. Where was one to put it? And just think, how often it happens that people pray to God to have children! But no, God gives them none; or they are all still-born. Look at our priest's wife now.

. . . And here, where it's not wanted, here it lives. [*Looks toward the cellar.*] I suppose he's finished. [*To* ANÍSYA.] Well?

Anís. [*looking into the cellar*]. He's put a board on it and is sitting on it. It must be finished!

Mat. Oh, oh! One would be glad not to sin, but what's one to do?

Reënter NIKÍTA *from cellar, trembling all over.*

Nik. It's still alive! I can't! It's alive!

Anís. If it's alive, where are you off to? [*Tries to stop him.*]

Nik. [*rushes at her*]. Go away! I'll kill you! [*Catches hold of her arms; she escapes, he runs after her with the spade.* MATRYÓNA *runs toward him and stops him.* ANÍSYA *runs into the porch.* MATRYÓNA *tries to wrench the spade from him. To his mother.*] I'll kill you! I'll kill you! Go away! [MATRYÓNA *runs to* ANÍSYA *in the porch.* NIKÍTA *stops.*] I'll kill you! I'll kill you all!

Mat. That's because he's so frightened! Never mind, it will pass!

Nik. What have they made me do? What have they made me do? How it whimpered. . . . How it crunched under me! What have they done with me? . . . And it's really alive, still alive! [*Listens in silence.*] It's whimpering . . . There, it's whimpering. [*Runs to the cellar.*]

Mat. [*to* ANÍSYA]. He's going; it seems he means to bury it. Nikíta, you'd better take the lantern!

Nik. [*does not heed her, but listens by the cellar door*]. I can hear nothing! I suppose it was fancy! [*Moves away, then stops.*] How the little bones crunched under me. Krr . . . kr . . . What have they made me do? [*Listens again.*] Again whimpering! It's really whimpering! What can it be? Mother! Mother, I say! [*Goes up to her.*]

Mat. What is it, sonnie?

Nik. Mother, my own mother, I can't do any more! Can't do any more! My own mother, have some pity on me!

Mat. Oh, dear, how frightened you are, my darling! Come, come, drink a drop to give you courage!

Nik. Mother, mother! It seems my time has come!

What have you done with me? How the little bones crunched, and how it whimpered! My own mother! What have you done with me? [*Steps aside and sits down on the sledge.*]

Mat. Come, my own, have a drink! It certainly does seem uncanny at night-time. But wait a bit. When the day breaks, you know, and one day and another passes, you'll forget even to think of it. Wait a bit; when the girl's married we'll even forget to think of it. But you go and have a drink; have a drink! I'll go and put things straight in the cellar myself.

Nik. [*rouses himself*]. Is there any drink left? Perhaps I can drink it off! [*Exit.*

[ANÍSYA, *who has stood all the time by the door, silently makes way for him.*]

Mat. Go, go, honey, and I'll set to work! I'll go down myself and dig! Where has he thrown the spade to? [*Finds the spade, and goes down into the cellar.*] Anísya, come here! Hold the light, will you?

Anís. And what of him?

Mat. He's so frightened! You've been too hard with him. Leave him alone, he'll come to his senses. God help him! I'll set to work myself. Put the lantern down here. I can see.

[MATRYÓNA *disappears into the cellar.*

Anís. [*looking toward the door by which* NIKÍTA *entered the hut*]. Well, have you had enough spree? You've been puffing yourself up, but now you'll know how it feels! You'll lose some of your bluster!

Nik. [*rushes out of the hut toward the cellar*]. Mother, mother, I say!

Mat. [*puts out her head*]. What is it, sonnie?

Nik. [*listening*]. Don't bury it, it's alive! Don't you hear? Alive! There—it's whimpering! There . . . quite plain!

Mat. How can it whimper? Why, you've flattened it into a pancake! The whole head is smashed to bits!

Nik. What is it then? [*Stops his ears.*] It's still whimpering! I am lost! Lost! What have they done with me? . . . Where shall I go? [*Sits down on the step.*]

Akoulína's wedding is being celebrated, but Marína, who has come with her husband, waits at the barn and will not go to the hut, which is seen at a little distance. Nikíta approaches, hanging his head, swinging his arms and muttering.

Nik. [*sees and recognises* MARÍNA]. Marína, dearest friend, little Marína, what do you want?

Mar. I have come for my old man.

Nik. Why didn't you come to the wedding? You might have had a look round, and a laugh at my expense!

Mar. What have I to laugh at? I've come for my husband.

Nik. Ah, Marína dear! [*Tries to embrace her.*]

Mar. [*steps angrily aside*]. You'd better drop that sort of thing, Nikíta! What has been is past! I've come for my husband. Is he in your house?

Nik. So I must not remember the past? You won't let me?

Mar. It's no use recalling the past! What used to be is over now!

Nik. And can never come back, you mean?

Mar. And will never come back! But why have you gone away? You, the master—and to go away from the feast!

Nik. [*sits down on the straw*]. Why have I gone away? Eh, if you knew, if you had any idea . . . I'm dull, Marína, so dull that I wish my eyes would not see! I rose from the table and left them, to get away from the people. If I could only avoid seeing any one!

Mar. [*coming nearer to him*]. How's that?

Nik. This is how it is: when I eat, it's there! When I drink, it's there! When I sleep, it's there! I'm so sick of it—so sick! But it's chiefly because I'm all alone that I'm so sick, little Marína. I have no one to share my trouble.

Mar. You can't live your life without trouble, Nikíta. However, I've wept over mine and wept it away.

Nik. The former, the old trouble! Ah, dear friend, you've wept yours away and I've got mine up to there! [*Puts his hand to his throat.*]

Mar. But why?

Nik. Why, I'm sick of my whole life! I am sick of

myself! Ah, Marína, why did you not know how to keep me? You've ruined me, and yourself, too! Is this life?

Mar. [*stands by the barn crying, but restrains herself*]. I do not complain of my life, Nikíta! God grant every one a life like mine. I do not complain. I confessed to my old man at the time, and he forgave me. And he does not reproach me. I'm not discontented with my life. The old man is quiet, and is fond of me, and I keep his children clothed and washed! He is really kind to me. Why should I complain? It seems God willed it so. And what's the matter with your life? You are rich . . .

Nik. My life! . . . It's only that I don't wish to disturb the wedding feast, or I'd take this rope here—[*takes hold of the rope on the straw*]—and throw it across that rafter there. Then I'd make a noose and stretch it out, and I'd climb on to that rafter and jump down with my head in the noose! That's what my life is!

Mar. That's enough! Lord help you!

Nik. You think I'm joking? You think I'm drunk? I'm not drunk! To-day even drink takes no hold on me! I'm devoured by misery! Misery is eating me up completely, so that I care for nothing! Oh, little Marína, it's only with you I ever lived! Do you remember how we used to while away the nights together at the railway?

Mar. Don't you rub the sores, Nikíta! I'm bound legally now, and you, too. My sin has been forgiven, don't disturb . . .

Nik. What shall I do with my heart? Where am I to turn to?

They see Marína's husband coming toward them, red and tipsy. Nikíta lies down in the straw. Marína's husband puts his arm around her and she goes with him to the hut. Now that Nikíta has seen her life seems more sickening than ever.

Nan comes and tells him that every one is looking for him. The others have blessed the bride and are getting cross waiting for him. She finds it of no use talking to him, and runs to get her mother. He picks up the end of a rope lying in the straw, makes a noose, and tries it on his neck. Then he sees his mother coming, takes it off, and lies down again. Matryóna urges him to come and give

the bride his blessing. People have begun to talk, she says, and are putting two and two together. Anísya also comes and tells him he must go with them. She is tipsy.

At last he assures the women that he will follow them if they will start on ahead. When they have gone he sits down and takes his boots off, muttering it is a likely thing he will go; he will fix the noose and jump from the rafter. He pulls the rope toward him, but Mítritch, who has been lying in the straw in a drunken sleep, has hold of the other end and will not let go.

Mítritch, at last aroused, harangues Nikíta about his life in the army and the difficulty of keeping him from drinking. Flogging did no good, but at last he swore off. Now he has taken to drink, and drink he will. He fears no man. Why should one mind them—such muck as they are. Inspired by his talk with a feeling of contempt for men Nikíta gets up and goes to the hut.

Inside the women are singing their songs over again to kill the time. Nikíta enters with his father, holding his father's arm and pushing him ahead. He tells Akím he cannot do without him. The guests are astonished to see that Nikíta is barefoot as he comes forward and falls on his knees. His wife and mother try to raise him, but he takes no heed of them, looking straight in front of him.

Nik. Christian Commune! I have sinned, and I wish to confess!

Mat. [*shakes him by the shoulder*]. Are you mad? Dear friends, he's gone crazy! He must be taken away!

Nik. [*shakes her off*]. Leave me alone! And you, father, hear me! And first, Marína, look here! [*Bows to the ground to her and rises.*] I have sinned toward you! I promised to marry you, I tempted you and forsook you! Forgive me, in Christ's name! [*Again bows to the ground before her.*]

Anís. And what are you drivelling about? It's not becoming! No one wants to know! Get up! It's like your impudence!

Mat. Oh, oh, he's bewitched! And however did it happen? It's a spell! Get up! What nonsense are you jabbering? [*Pulls him.*]

Nik. [*shakes his head*]. Don't touch me! Forgive me

my sin toward you, Marína! Forgive me, for Christ's sake!

[MARÍNA *covers her face with her hands in silence.*]

Anís. Get up, I tell you! Don't be so impudent. What are you thinking about—to recall it? Enough humbug! It's shameful! Oh, my poor head! He's quite crazy!

Nik. [*pushes his wife away and turns to* AKOULÍNA]. Akoulína, now I'll speak to you! Listen, Christian Commune! I'm a fiend, Akoulína! I have sinned against you! Your father died no natural death! He was poisoned!

Anís. [*screams*]. Oh, my head! What's he about?

Mat. The man's beside himself! Lead him away!

[*The folk come up and try to seize him.*]

Akím [*motions them back with his arms*]. Wait! You lads, what d'ye call it, wait, I mean!

Nik. Akoulína, I poisoned him! Forgive me, in Christ's name!

Akou. [*jumps up*]. He's telling lies! I know who did it!

Matchmaker. What are you about? You sit still!

Akím. Oh, Lord, what sins, what sins!

Police Officer. Seize him, and send for the Elder! We must draw up an indictment and have witnesses to it! Get up and come here!

Akím [*to* POLICE OFFICER]. Now you—with the bright buttons—I mean, you wait! Let him, what d'ye call it, speak out, I mean!

Police Officer. Mind, old man, and don't interfere! I have to draw up an indictment!

Akím. Eh, what a fellow you are; wait, I say! Don't talk, I mean, about, what d'ye call it, 'ditements! Here God's work is being done. . . . A man is confessing, I mean! And you, what d'ye call it . . . 'ditements!

Police Officer. The Elder!

Akím. Let God's work be done, I mean, and then you, I mean, you do your business!

Nik. And, Akoulína, my sin is great toward you; I seduced you; forgive me in Christ's name! [*Bows to the ground before her.*]

Akou. [*leaves the table*]. Let me go! I shan't be married! He told me to, but I shan't now!

Police Officer. Repeat what you have said.

Nik. Wait, sir, let me finish!

Akim [*with rapture*]. Speak, my son! Tell everything —you'll feel better! Confess to God, don't fear men! God—God! It is He!

Nik. I poisoned the father, dog that I am, and I ruined the daughter! She was in my power, and I ruined her, and her baby!

Akou. True, that's true!

Nik. I smothered the baby in the cellar with a board! I sat on it and smothered it—and its bones crunched! [*Weeps.*] And I buried it! I did it all alone!

Akou. He raves! I told him to!

Nik. Don't shield me! I fear no one now! Forgive me, Christian Commune! [*Bows to the ground.*]

[*Silence.*]

Police Officer. Bind him! The marriage is evidently off!

[*Men come up with their belts.*]

Nik. Wait, there's plenty of time! [*Bows to the ground before his father.*] Father, dear father, forgive me, too—fiend that I am! You told me from the first, when I took to bad ways, you said then, "If a claw is caught, the bird is lost!" I would not listen to your words, dog that I was, and it has turned out as you said! Forgive me, for Christ's sake!

Akim [*rapturously*]. God will forgive you, my own son! [*Embraces him.*] You have had no mercy on yourself, He will show mercy on you! God—God! It is He!

Enter ELDER.

Elder. There are witnesses enough here.

Police Officer. We will have the examination at once.

[NIKÍTA *is bound.*]

Akou. [*goes and stands by his side*]. I shall tell the truth! Ask me!

Nik. No need to ask! I did it all myself. The design was mine, and the deed was mine. Take me where you like. I will say no more!

THE FATHER*

By August Strindberg

First played in Sweden in 1887.

Argument: The captain feels that the life of one's children is a sort of immortality, the only one he believes in, and wishes to educate his daughter as he thinks best, but all of his wife's ideas are opposed to his, and to thwart him she does everything in her power to aggravate his nervous irritability and to have him locked up as insane. Finally, she succeeds in upsetting him very much by telling him that her daughter is not his daughter, and that although he was necessary at one time as a provider she now means to place him in an asylum and live on his pension. Will she succeed in driving him insane and be able to bring up her daughter to suit herself?

The captain has decided to send his daughter away from home to finish her education because the house is full of women who all want to have their say about the matter. He, who has the chief right to try to form her character, as he tells the pastor, is constantly opposed in his efforts.

Pastor. You have too many women trying to run this house.

Captain. You're right! It's like going into a cage full of tigers, and if I didn't hold a red-hot iron under their noses they would tear me to pieces any moment. And you laugh, you rascal! Wasn't it enough that I married your sister, without your palming off your old stepmother on me?

Past. But, good heavens, one can't have stepmothers in one's own house!

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Capt. No, you think it is better to have mothers-in-law in some one else's house!

Past. Oh, well, we all have some burden in life.

The pastor warns the captain, however, to keep a tight rein on his women folks and not let them run things too much. The captain does not see how he can manage to do anything of the sort. The worst thing of all, he says, is that Laura, his wife, will not let their daughter Bertha leave them. The pastor says that when Laura was a child, if she set her mind on anything she used to lie like a corpse until she got it, and then as likely as not she would give it back, explaining that she did not care about the thing, whatever it was, but about getting her own way. Upon leaving, the pastor expresses anxiety about the captain's health.

Laura finds the captain by himself and asks him if he has come to a decision about Bertha. He replies that Bertha is to go to a boarding-school in town. It is according to the law, he informs her, that children should be brought up in their father's faith because the woman sells her birthright by a legal transaction and forfeits her rights in return for the man's responsibility of caring for her and her children. He goes out, and the new doctor calls.

Laura informs the doctor that it is her painful duty to tell him that her husband's mind is affected. The doctor is greatly surprised, having read some treatises written by the captain and found that they displayed a profound and powerful intellect. Nevertheless, she says, her husband has extraordinary ideas, buys books that he never reads, and insists that he can tell all about what is going on on another planet by looking into a microscope. This sounds rather grave to the doctor, and he warns her to avoid suggesting any ideas that might make a deep impression on the patient, for in a weak brain they develop rapidly and quickly turn to monomania, or fixed ideas.

Laura. You mean to avoid arousing suspicions?

Doctor. Exactly. One can make the insane believe anything, just because they are receptive to everything.

A bell rings and she excuses herself. The captain returns and the doctor talks with him, learning that it was with the spectroscope that he made a certain discovery, and not with the microscope as the captain's wife had said

he claimed. The captain is greatly hampered, he tells the doctor, because he cannot get any booksellers to send him any books, or even to answer his letters. It is maddening. He fears he will not get his treatise done in time, and he knows that they are working on the same thing in Berlin.

The captain's old nurse, for whom he has a sincere affection, has a talk with him about Bertha in behalf of his wife. A mother, she says, has only her child. The captain replies that he bears a triple burden, otherwise he should have held a better position than that of a poor soldier. He wishes to give his child his soul. He tells the nurse she must not desert him, now when they have begun to weave a plot around him and the doctor is not his friend.

Nurse. Oh, Mr. Adolf, you believe evil about everybody. But you see it's because you haven't the true faith; that's just what it is.

Capt. Yes, you and the Baptists have found the only true faith. You are indeed lucky!

Nurse. Anyway, I'm not unhappy like you, Mr. Adolf. Humble your heart and you will see that God will make you happy in your love for your neighbor.

Capt. It's a strange thing that you no sooner speak of God and love than your voice becomes hard and your eyes fill with hate. No, Margaret, surely you have not the true faith.

Nurse. Yes, go on being proud and hard in your learning, but it won't amount to much when it comes to the test.

Capt. How mightily you talk, humble heart. I know very well that knowledge is of no use to you women.

Nurse. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. But in spite of everything old Margaret cares most for her great big boy, and he will come back to the fold when it's stormy weather.

Capt. Margaret! Forgive me, but believe me when I say that there is no one here who wishes me well but you. Help me, for I feel that something is going to happen here. What it is, I don't know, but something evil is on the way. [*Scream from within.*] What's that? Who's that screaming?

Bertha comes in and tells her father that her grandmother wanted to hurt her because their spirit writing that they

were practising did not go just right. He asks her if she would like to go to town and learn something useful. The idea of going to town is pleasing to her. Her mother returns to the room and the captain asks Bertha to leave them.

Laura. You were afraid of hearing her opinion, because you thought it would be to my advantage.

Capt. I know that she wishes to go away from home, but I know also that you possess the power of changing her mind to suit your pleasure.

Laura. Oh, am I really so powerful?

Capt. Yes, you have a fiendish power of getting your own way; but so has any one who does not scruple about the way it is accomplished. How did you get Doctor Norling away, for instance, and how did you get this new doctor here?

Laura. Yes, how did I manage that?

Capt. You insulted the other one so much that he left, and made your brother recommend this fellow.

Laura. Well, that was quite simple and legitimate. Is Bertha to leave home now?

Capt. Yes, she is to start in a fortnight.

Laura. That is your decision?

Capt. Yes.

Laura. Then I must try to prevent it.

Capt. You cannot.

Laura. Can't I? Do you really think I would trust my daughter to wicked people to have her taught that everything her mother has implanted in her child is mere foolishness? Why, afterward, she would despise me all the rest of her life!

Capt. Do you think that a father should allow ignorant and conceited women to teach his daughter that he is a charlatan?

Laura. It means less to the father.

Capt. Why so?

Laura. Because the mother is closer to the child, as it has been discovered that no one can tell for a certainty who the father of a child is.

Capt. How does that apply to this case?

Laura. You do not know whether you are Bertha's father or not.

Capt. I do not know?

Laura. No; what no one knows you surely cannot know.

Capt. Are you joking?

Laura. No; I am only making use of your own teaching. For that matter, how do you know that I have not been unfaithful to you?

Capt. I believe you capable of almost anything, but not that, nor that you would talk about it if it were true.

Laura. Suppose that I was prepared to bear anything, even to being despised and driven out, everything for the sake of being able to keep and control my child, and that I am truthful now when I declare that Bertha is my child, but not yours. Suppose——

Capt. Stop now!

Laura. Just suppose this. In that case your power would be at an end.

Capt. When you had proved that I was not the father.

Laura. That would not be difficult! Would you like me to do so?

Capt. Stop——!

Laura. Of course I should only need to declare the name of the real father, give all details of place and time. For instance—when was Bertha born? In the third year of our marriage?

Capt. Stop now, or else——

Laura. Or else, what? Shall we stop now? Think carefully about all you do and decide, and whatever you do, don't make yourself ridiculous.

Capt. I consider all this most lamentable.

Laura. Which makes you all the more ridiculous.

Capt. And you?

Laura. Oh, we women are really too clever.

Capt. That's why one cannot contend with you.

Laura. Then why provoke contests with a superior enemy?

Capt. Superior?

Laura. Yes, it's queer, but I have never looked at a man without knowing myself to be his superior.

Capt. Then you shall be made to see your superior for once, so that you shall never forget it.

Laura. That will be interesting.

Nurse [*comes in*]. Supper is served. Will you come in?
Laura. Very well.
[CAPTAIN *lingers; sits down with a magazine in an armchair near table.*]
Laura. Aren't you coming in to supper?
Capt. No, thanks. I don't want anything.
Laura. What, are you annoyed?
Capt. No, but I am not hungry.
Laura. Come, or they will ask unnecessary questions —be good now. You won't? Stay there then. [*Goes.*
Nurse. Mr. Adolf! What is this all about?
Capt. I don't know what it is. Can you explain to me why you women treat an old man as if he were a child?
Nurse. I don't understand it, but it must be because all you men, great and small, are women's children, every man of you.
Capt. But no women are born of men. Yes, but I am Bertha's father. Tell me, Margaret, don't you believe it? Don't you?
Nurse. Lord, how silly you are. Of course you are your own child's father. Come and eat now, and don't sit there and sulk. There, there, come now.
Capt. Get out, woman. To hell with the hags. [*Goes to private door.*] Svärd, Svärd!
ORDERLY *comes in.*
Orderly. Yes, Captain.
Capt. Hitch into the covered sleigh at once.
Nurse. Captain, listen to me.
Capt. Out, woman! At once! [ORDERLY *goes.*
Nurse. Good Lord, what's going to happen now.
[CAPTAIN *puts on his cap and coat and prepares to go out.*]
Capt. Don't expect me home before midnight. [*Goes.*
Nurse. Lord preserve us, whatever will be the end of this!

That evening the doctor informs Laura that her husband is not only cleared of all suspicion of insanity, but that he has rendered a great service to science. She should be very careful about making such charges, he says, because when a certificate in lunacy is in question it may mean the loss to the subject of both civil and family rights. Laura

admits that she intercepted her husband's letters to the booksellers so that he should not waste their money. The doctor tells her that that was likely to make him suspicious and to irritate him, especially by thwarting his will in regard to his deepest desires.

Laura informs the doctor further that the captain raved in the strangest way early in the evening, having the idea that he was not the father of his child. She begins to cry, as she says she fears there is no hope for her husband. Six years previously he was in the same condition, and he wrote to the doctor himself that he feared for his reason. It is after midnight when the captain returns. He wishes to discuss the subject of heredity with the doctor, and makes the point that paternity cannot be proved by likeness of the offspring to the supposed father.

Capt. Didn't you ever feel ridiculous as a father? I know of nothing so ludicrous as to see a father leading his children by the hand around the streets, or to hear a father talk about his children. "My wife's children," he ought to say. Did you ever feel how false your position was? Weren't you ever afflicted with doubts, I won't say suspicions, for, as a gentleman, I assume that your wife was above suspicion.

Doc. No, really, I never was; but, Captain, I believe Goethe says a man must take his children on good faith.

Capt. It's risky to take anything on good faith where a woman is concerned.

Doc. Oh, there are so many kinds of women.

Capt. Modern investigations have pronounced that there is only one kind!

Women, the captain says, are unconscious of their instinctive dishonesty. The doctor replies that his thoughts are taking a morbid turn, and that he ought to control them.

Capt. You must not use the word morbid. Steam boilers, as you know, explode at a certain pressure, but the same pressure is not needed for all boiler explosions. You understand? However, you are here to watch me. If I were not a man I should have the right to make accusations or complaints, as they are so cleverly called, and perhaps I should be able to give you the whole diagnosis, and, what is more, the history of my disease. But, unfortunately, I

am a man, and there is nothing for me to do but, like a Roman, fold my arms across my breast and hold my breath till I die.

When the doctor goes, the captain opens a side door and finds his wife, who has been eavesdropping. She is embarrassed for a moment. He tells her that he has been to the post office and discovered that she has been keeping back his mail, and that in consequence the result that he expected from his work has been destroyed. He has therefore intercepted letters for her and found that she has been arraying his friends against him by spreading reports regarding his mental condition. Not one person from the colonel down to the cook believes any longer that he is sane. He says that she has undermined his will, and that sooner or later his intellect will go to smash.

Capt. I will not appeal to your feelings, for you have none; that is your strength; but I will appeal to your interests.

Laura. Let me hear.

Capt. You have succeeded in arousing my suspicions to such an extent that my judgment is no longer clear, and my thoughts begin to wander. This is the approaching insanity that you are waiting for, which may come at any time now. So you are face to face with the question whether it is more to your interest that I should be sane or insane. Consider. If I go under I shall lose the service, and where will you be then? If I die, my life insurance will fall to you. But if I take my own life, you will get nothing. Consequently, it is to your interest that I should live out my life.

Laura. Is this a trap?

Capt. To be sure. But it rests with you whether you will run around it or stick your head into it.

Laura. You say that you will kill yourself! You won't do that!

Capt. Are you sure? Do you think a man can live when he has nothing and no one to live for?

Laura. You surrender, then?

Capt. No, I offer peace.

Laura. The conditions?

Capt. That I may keep my reason. Free me from my suspicions and I give up the conflict.

Laura. What suspicions?

Capt. About Bertha's origin.

Laura. Are there any doubts about that?

Capt. Yes, I have doubts, and you have awakened them.

Laura. I?

Capt. Yes, you have dropped them like henbane in my ears, and circumstances have strengthened them. Free me from the uncertainty; tell me outright that it is true and I will forgive you beforehand.

Laura. How can I acknowledge a sin that I have not committed?

Capt. What does it matter when you know that I shall not divulge it? Do you think a man would go and spread his own shame broadcast?

Laura. If I say it isn't true, you won't be convinced; but if I say it is, then you will be convinced. You seem to hope it is true!

Capt. Yes, strangely enough; it must be, because the first supposition can't be proved; the latter can be.

Laura. Have you any ground for your suspicions?

Capt. Yes and no.

Laura. I believe you want to prove me guilty so that you can get rid of me and then have absolute control over the child. But you won't catch me in any such snare.

Capt. Do you think that I would want to be responsible for another man's child if I were convinced of your guilt?

Laura. No, I'm sure you wouldn't, and that's what makes me know you lied just now when you said that you would forgive me beforehand.

Capt. [*rises*]. Laura, save me and my reason. You don't seem to understand what I say. If the child is not mine I have no control over her and don't want to have any, and that is precisely what you do want, isn't it? But perhaps you want even more—to have power over the child, but still have me to support you.

Laura. Power, yes! What has this whole life and death struggle been for but power?

Capt. To me it has meant more. I do not believe in a hereafter; the child was my future life. That was my conception of immortality, and perhaps the only one that has

any analogy in reality. If you take that away from me, you cut off my life.

When they had been married for two years they had not had a child. He fell ill and lay at the point of death. In an interval of fever he heard her talking in the next room with a lawyer about the fortune that he still possessed at that time. He heard the lawyer explain that she could not inherit the property from her husband because she had no children. He recovered and they had a child. He asks who its father was. She replies that he was.

Capt. No, I am not. Here is a buried crime that begins to stench, and what a hellish crime! You women have been compassionate enough to free the black slaves, but you have kept the white ones. I have worked and slaved for you, your child, your mother, your servants; I have sacrificed promotion and career; I have endured torture, flagellation, sleeplessness, worry for your sake, until my hair has grown gray; and all that you might enjoy life without care, and when you grew old, enjoy life over again in your child. I have borne everything without complaint, because I thought myself the father of your child. This is the commonest kind of theft, the most brutal slavery. I have had seventeen years of penal servitude and have been innocent. What can you give me in return for that?

Laura. Now you are quite mad.

He says he has seen how she has labored to conceal her sin, and that he often lulled her evil conscience because he thought he was chasing away a morbid thought. He has heard her cry out in her sleep without allowing himself to listen. He remembers now that the night before last, Bertha's birthday, she screamed as if some one were strangling her. He had had his suspicions but did not dare to hear them confirmed.

She swears by God and all that she holds sacred that he is Bertha's father. Not believing her, he implores her to tell him the truth, as a wounded man begs for a death blow. He says that he simply implores pity like a sick man, lays down the tokens of his power and prays for mercy on his life. She approaches him, and laying her hand on his forehead, is surprised to find that he is crying.

She always felt a motherly sympathy for him when he

seemed like a child, but as a man she regarded him as her enemy, because love between the sexes is strife. She did not give herself as he thought, she says, but took what she wanted. He realizes that one of them must go under in this struggle. She says that the stronger will be in the right; she has the power, she assures him, with which to put him under control.

Laura. And then I shall educate my child without listening to your fantastic notions.

Capt. And who will pay for the education when I am no longer here?

Laura. Your pension will pay for it.

Capt. [*threateningly*]. How can you have me put under a guardian?

Laura [*takes out a letter*]. With this letter of which an attested copy is in the hands of the board of lunacy.

Capt. What letter?

Laura [*moving backward toward the door left*]. Yours! Your declaration to the doctor that you are insane. [*The* CAPTAIN *stares at her in silence.*] Now you have fulfilled your function as an unfortunately necessary father and breadwinner, you are not needed any longer and you must go. You must go, since you have realized that my intellect is as strong as my will, and since you will not stay and acknowledge it.

[*The* CAPTAIN *goes to the table, seizes the lighted lamp and hurls it at* LAURA, *who disappears backward through the door.*]

It is night. The captain is locked in his room. His orderly has removed the cartridges from the captain's room at his wife's order. In the sitting-room they can hear the captain sawing. Laura is taking papers out of the captain's desk when the pastor comes in. Terrible things have been happening, she says; Adolf has conceived the wild idea that Bertha is not his child, and has thrown the lamp at her. The pastor perceives that this is fully developed insanity.

In the desk are a few keepsakes that the captain had treasured for many years, a doll that had belonged to Laura when she was a child, her letters, and a locket. The pastor wipes his eyes when she has shown them to

him, but he understands the situation and admires his sister.

Past. You are strong, Laura, incredibly strong. You are like a fox in a trap, you would rather gnaw off your own leg than let yourself be caught! Like a master thief—no accomplice, not even your own conscience. Look at yourself in the glass! You dare not!

Laura. I never use a looking-glass!

Past. No, you dare not! Let me look at your hand. Not a tell-tale blood stain, not a trace of insidious poison! A little innocent murder that the law cannot reach, an unconscious crime—unconscious! What a splendid idea! Do you hear how he is working up there? Take care! If that man gets loose he will make short work of you.

Laura. You talk so much, you must have a bad conscience. Accuse me if you can!

Past. I cannot.

Laura. You see! You cannot, and therefore I am innocent. You take care of your ward, and I will take care of mine! Here's the doctor.

The doctor comes in. It devolves upon him to decide whether the captain's violence was an outbreak of passion or madness. The pastor at once interposes that the subject has fixed ideas. They are less fixed than the pastor's, the doctor thinks. He believes, however, that it will be "most advantageous for all parties" that the captain should be treated as insane. He sends for the nurse and shows her a strait-jacket, which, he says, she is to slip on the captain from behind. He is going to bring the captain in, for he thinks the door will not hold out much longer.

A door at one side of the room is suddenly burst open, sending flying a chair that was braced against it. The captain comes in. He has several books in his hands, from which he reads selections to the effect that it is a wise child that knows its own father. He turns on the pastor and asks him if he believes he is the father of his children, reminding him of a handsome young tutor who lived in his house. The pastor is distressed, and the doctor is even more so when his turn comes and the captain reminds him of a certain lieutenant who boarded at his house.

Past. Do you know, Adolf, that you are insane?

Capt. Yes; I know that well enough. But if I only had the handling of your illustrious brains for a while I'd soon have you shut up, too! I am mad, but how did I become so?

He takes the photograph album from the table and looks at Bertha's picture. Now that his conception of immortality has been taken from him, he says, he has nothing to live for, and what can he do with his life when he is dishonored? He wants to die. Telling them to do with him as they will he buries his head on his arms upon the table. The doctor whispers to the pastor and they go out. Soon after Bertha comes in.

Bertha [goes up to the CAPTAIN]. Are you ill, father?

Capt. [looks up dazed]. I?

Ber. Do you know what you have done? Do you know that you threw the lamp at mother?

Capt. Did I?

Ber. Yes, you did. Just think if she had been hurt.

Capt. What would that have mattered?

Ber. You are not my father when you talk like that.

Capt. What do you say? Am I not your father? How do you know that? Who told you that? And who is your father, then? Who?

Ber. Not you, at any rate.

Capt. Still not I? Who, then? Who? You seem to be well informed. Who told you? That I should live to see my child come and tell me to my face that I am not her father! But don't you know that you disgrace your mother when you say that? Don't you know that it is to her shame if it is so?

Ber. Don't say anything bad about mother; do you hear?

Capt. No; you hold together, every one of you, against me, and you have always done so.

Ber. Father!

Capt. Don't use that word again!

Ber. Father, father!

Capt. [draws her to him]. Bertha, dear, dear child, you are my child! Yes, yes; it cannot be otherwise. It is so. The other was only sickly thoughts that come with the wind like pestilence and fever. Look at me that I may see my soul in your eyes!—But I see her soul, too! You have

two souls, and you love me with one and hate me with the other. But you must only love me! You must have only one soul, or you will never have peace, nor I, either. You must have only one mind, which is the child of my mind, and one will, which is my will.

He says he is a cannibal and wants to eat her; her mother wanted to eat him; and that he is Saturn, who ate his children because it had been prophesied that they would eat him. To eat or be eaten! That is the question. He goes and takes a revolver from the wall. Bertha screams for help and tries to escape. The nurse comes in and finds the captain examining the revolver, from which the cartridges have been removed. She says that she put them away when she was tidying up, but that if he will sit down and be quiet she will get them.

She takes the captain by the arm and gets him to a chair, into which he sinks feebly. Then she takes out the strait-jacket from under a shawl and goes behind the chair. She reminds him of how she used to tuck him in at night when he was a little boy, and would light the candles and tell him stories when he had bad dreams. It soothes him to hear her talk.

Nurse. Oh, yes, but you must listen then! Do you remember when you took the big kitchen knife and wanted to cut out boats with it, and how I came in and had to get the knife away by fooling you? You were just a little child who didn't understand, so I had to fool you, for you didn't know that it was for your own good. "Give me that snake," I said, "or it will bite you!" and then you let go of the knife. [*Takes the revolver out of the* CAPTAIN'S *hand.*] And then when you had to be dressed and didn't want to, I had to coax you and say that you should have a coat of gold and be dressed like a prince. And then I took your little blouse that was just made of green wool and held it in front of you and said: "In with both arms," and then I said, "Now sit nice and still while I button it down the back." [*She puts the strait-jacket on.*] And then I said, "Get up now, and walk across the floor like a good boy so I can see how it fits." [*She leads him to the sofa.*] And then I said, "Now you must go to bed."

Capt. What did you say? Was I to go to bed when I was dressed—damnation! what have you done to me?

[*Tries to get free.*] Ah! you cunning devil of a woman! Who would have thought you had so much wit. [*Lies down on sofa.*] Trapped, shorn, outwitted, and not to be able to die!

The nurse tells him she wanted to keep him from killing his child. He calls his orderly and tells him to throw the woman out, but the orderly says that he cannot lay hands on a woman. Laura comes in and motions to the orderly to go.

Capt. Omphale, Omphale! Now you play with the club while Hercules spins your wool.

Laura [*goes to sofa*]. Adolf, look at me. Do you believe I am your enemy?

He replies that they are all his enemies, his mother, his sister, his daughter, and especially his wife, because she never let up until he lay there lifeless.

Laura. I don't know that I ever thought or even intended what you think I did. It may be that a dim desire to get rid of you as an obstacle lay at the bottom of it, and if you see any design in my behavior, it is possible that it existed, although I was unconscious of it. I have never thought how it all came about, but it is the result of the course you yourself laid out, and before God and my conscience I feel that I am innocent, even if I am not. Your existence has lain like a stone on my heart—lain so heavily that I tried to shake off the oppressive burden. This is the truth, and if I have unconsciously struck you down, I ask your forgiveness.

She declares that his suspicions about the child are absolutely groundless. He complains of cold, and she spreads her shawl over him. He says it smells of vanilla, and reminds him of her hair when she was young, and they walked in the birch woods, with the primroses and the thrushes. He compares the beauty of life then with what it is now. He asks her to take her shawl away and give him his army coat. He calls it his lion skin, likening himself again to Hercules, and her to Omphale.

Capt. Omphale! You cunning woman, champion of peace and contriver of man's disarmament. Wake, Hercules, before they take your club away from you! You would wile our armor from us, too, and make believe that it is nothing but glittering finery. No, it was iron, let me

tell you, before it ever glittered. In olden days the smith made the armor, now it is the needlewoman. Omphale! Omphale! Rude strength has fallen before treacherous weakness.—Out on you infernal woman, and damnation on your sex! [*He raises himself to spit, but falls back on the sofa.*] What have you given me for a pillow, Margaret? It is so hard, and so cold, so cold. Come and sit near me. There. May I put my head on your knee? So!—This is warm! Bend over me so that I can feel your breast! Oh, it is sweet to sleep against a woman's breast, a mother's or a mistress's, but the mother's is sweetest.

Laura. Would you like to see your child, Adolf?

Capt. My child? A man has no children, it is only woman who has children, and therefore the future is hers when we die childless. O God, who holds his children dear!

Nurse. Listen, he is praying to God.

Capt. No, to you to put me to sleep, for I am tired, so tired. Good-night, Margaret, and blessed be you among women.

[*He raises himself, but falls with a cry on the* NURSE's *lap.* LAURA *goes to left and calls the* DOCTOR *who comes in with the* PASTOR.]

Laura. Help us, Doctor, if it isn't too late. Look, he has stopped breathing.

Doc. [*feels the* CAPTAIN'S *pulse*]. It is a stroke.

Past. Is he dead?

Doc. No, he may yet come back to life, but to what an awakening we cannot tell.

Past. "First death, and then the judgment."

Doc. No judgment, and no accusations. You who believe that a God shapes man's destiny must go to him about this.

Nurse. Ah, Pastor, with his last breath he prayed to God.

Past. [*to* LAURA]. Is that true?

Laura. It is.

Doc. In that case, which I can understand as little as the cause of his illness, my skill is at an end. You try yours now, Pastor.

Laura. Is that all you have to say at this deathbed, Doctor?

Doc. That is all! I know no more. Let him speak who knows more.

[BERTHA *comes in from left and runs to her mother.*]

Ber. Mother, mother!

Laura. My child, my own child!

Past. Amen.

HEDDA GABLER

By Henrik Ibsen

First played in Munich at the Residenz Theatre, January 31, 1891.

Argument: Hedda Gabler, married to George Tesman simply because he was bent on being allowed to provide for her and she listened to the prevailing opinion that he was destined to attain the highest distinction, has discovered that he is a hopeless mediocrity, and has returned from her wedding journey bored almost beyond endurance by the prospect of the life before her. She finds that Eilert Lövborg, in whom she formerly felt a keen interest, but who was very dissipated, has been reclaimed and enabled to produce a work of brilliant genius by the devotion of Thea Elvsted, whom she always regarded as a thoroughly insignificant little creature. It is a question only of the manner in which Hedda's desperate exasperation and malevolence will find an outlet.

After a wedding tour on the Continent lasting nearly six months, which George Tesman has combined with the pursuit of researches into the history of civilization, a purpose for which he holds a scholarship, he has returned with his bride to Christiania and spent the first night in their new home. Tesman's old aunt, Juliana, has come in the first thing in the morning to put some flowers in the drawing-room.

Tesman soon comes downstairs. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open, cheerful face, fair hair and beard, and wears spectacles. His aunt greets him most affectionately. He compliments her on her bonnet, which she explains is a new one that she bought so that his wife need not feel ashamed of her if they should happen to go out together.

Miss Tesman has hardly become accustomed even yet

to the idea of her nephew having made such a brilliant match with the beautiful and aristocratic Hedda Gabler. With a complacent smile, he remarks that he fancies he has several good friends about town who would like to be in his shoes. Before long she asks quite pointedly whether he has any expectations to tell her about. He can think of nothing but his hope of becoming a professor.

It might seem rather extravagant for him to have taken such a fine house, one that belonged formerly to a cabinet minister, he admits, but he explains that Judge Brack has written to Hedda that he got the lease on good terms for them. Tesman is somewhat startled to learn that his aunts have given a mortgage on their annuity as security for his furniture and carpets. Heavy expenses are unavoidable, however, as Hedda has rather grand ideas and is quite inflexible.

Hedda joins them. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-gray eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is not interested in the little things which seem to have great importance for her husband and his aunt, and presently she pretends to think that Miss Tesman's bonnet, which she sees on a chair, is an old one left there by the servant.

Tesman tells his aunt to take a good look at Hedda before going and see how handsome she is. He thinks she has filled out on the journey.

Hedda [*crossing the room*]. Oh, do be quiet——

Miss Tesman [*who has stopped and turned*]. Filled out?

Tesman. Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see——

Hedda [*at the glass door, impatiently*]. Oh, you can't see anything.

Tes. It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol——

Hedda [*curtly, interrupting*]. I am exactly as I was when I started.

No sooner has Miss Tesman gone than Mrs. Elvsted calls. Hedda tells Tesman that she is the girl with the irritating hair who was always showing it off, an old flame of his.

Mrs. Elvsted is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty,

soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than Hedda. Mrs. Elvsted says that she is in trouble and has no one to turn to; she is anxious not to be misunderstood. In that case, Hedda says, Mrs. Elvsted had better tell her the whole story.

The starting-point of that story is that Eilert Lövborg is in town. Miss Tesman had just referred to the fact to her nephew that Lövborg was formerly his most dangerous rival before falling from grace.

Mrs. Elvsted. He has been here a week already. Just fancy—a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

Hedda. But my dear Mrs. Elvsted, how does he concern you so much?

Mrs. E. [*looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly*]. He was the children's tutor.

The children are her husband's. She has none. They had quite reclaimed Lövborg at their house. For two years now his conduct has been irreproachable, and while he was with them he wrote a book dealing with the march of civilization, just published, which has already brought in considerable money.

Hedda finds it a little odd that Mr. Elvsted should not have come to look up the tutor instead of sending his wife. She tells Tesman he must write to Lövborg inviting him to the house, and sends him into another room to do so at once, impressing it upon him that he must make the letter cordial, friendly, and long.

Having got rid of Tesman, Hedda says that Mrs. Elvsted must tell her the rest of the story. Mrs. Elvsted protests that there is no more. Hedda knows better. Mrs. Elvsted is very uncomfortable and tries to go, but Hedda makes her sit down and talk about her life at home. To begin with, Mrs. Elvsted confides in Hedda that she used to be very much afraid of her when they were in school together. Hedda used to pull her hair and once threatened to burn it off her head. Hedda's attitude now is friendly in the extreme.

Several years earlier Mrs. Elvsted went to her present

husband's home as governess. The first wife died after a time and the governess automatically became the second. At first all went smoothly. But the last three years—— If Hedda could only imagine——! Hedda asks if it was not about three years ago that Lövborg went to them. It was. Also, Elvsted, being the sheriff, has been away a good deal travelling about the country.

Leaning against Mrs. Elvsted's chair, Hedda says her poor sweet friend must tell her everything exactly as it stands. Mrs. Elvsted replies that Hedda must question her. In the first place, the sheriff is about twenty years older than his wife; everything about him is repellent to her; they have not a single thought in common or a single point of sympathy. He did not know that she was coming to town. Hedda wants to know what he will say when she goes back again.

Mrs. E. I shall never go back to him again.

Hedda [*rising and going toward her*]. Then you have left your home—for good and all?

Mrs. E. Yes. There was nothing else to be done.

Hedda. But then—to take flight so openly.

Mrs. E. Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

Hedda. But what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

Mrs. E. They may say what they like, for aught *I* care. [*Seats herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*] I have done nothing but what I had to do.

Hedda [*after a short silence*]. And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

Mrs. E. I don't know yet. I only know this, that I must live here, where Eilert Lövborg is—if I am to live at all.

The influence that Mrs. Elvsted gained over Lövborg came gradually. He dropped his bad habits because they were repulsive to her. He didn't give her lessons exactly, but he talked to her about an infinity of things and made a real human being of her. Then came the lovely, happy time when she began to share in his work. He never wrote anything without her assistance. Yet, in spite of all this, Mrs. Elvsted is not sure how long their comradeship will last; a woman's shadow stands between them.

Hedda [*looks at her anxiously*]. Who can that be?

Mrs. E. I don't know. Some one he knew in his—in his past. Some one he has never been able wholly to forget.

Hedda. What has he told you—about this?

Mrs. E. He has only once—quite vaguely—alluded to it.

Hedda. Well! And what did he say?

Mrs. E. He said that when they parted she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

Mrs. Elvsted is inclined to think it is a certain red-haired woman who sings. She has heard that this singing woman is in town again; she doesn't know what to do. She wrings her hands. Tesman has finished the letter, and Judge Brack calls. Hedda goes out with Mrs. Elvsted.

Judge Brack is a man of forty-five; thick-set, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows are thick. His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking suit a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eyeglass which he now and then lets drop.

In the opinion of Judge Brack it would have been better if Tesman had gone about things a little more economically. Tesman's appointment may hang fire. Such things happen. At last he comes out with the fact that the nomination may be made conditional on the result of a competition. Hedda, who has returned to the room, seems much interested. Tesman guesses that his competitor is Lövborg. He is right.

It strikes Tesman as indicating a most incredible lack of consideration for Lövborg to become a candidate now. Tesman married on the strength of his prospects, and borrowed money extensively because the appointment was as good as promised to him.

Brack. Well, well, well—no doubt you will get it in the end; only after a contest.

Hedda [*immovable in her armchair*]. Fancy, Tesman, there will be a sort of sporting interest in that.

Tes. Why, my dearest Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it?

Hedda [*as before*]. I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see who wins.

Brack. In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you set about the little purchases I hear you are threatening.

Hedda. This can make no difference.

Judge Brack soon takes his leave.

Tes. Oh, Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

Hedda [*looks at him, smiling*]. Do *you* do that?

Tes. Yes, dear—there is no denying—it was adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

Hedda. Perhaps you are right there.

Tes. Well—at all events, we have our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

Hedda [*rising slowly and wearily*]. It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

She finds it rather annoying that they are not to have a footman right away, nor the saddle-horse that she wanted. She says, however, that she has one thing to kill time with, the pistols that belonged to her father, the general. She goes into the next room. Tesman seems rather alarmed and rushes after her.

Tes. No, for Heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh!

That afternoon Hedda gets out the pistols. Seeing Judge Brack come up the garden path, she threatens to shoot him for sneaking in the back way and sends a bullet whistling by his ear. This prank makes the Judge rather nervous, but he reaches the haven of the drawing-room safely and takes a look at the pistols, which he recognizes as General Gabler's.

It appears that while Judge Brack has been wishing every day that Hedda were at home again she has been wishing the same thing. What she found most intolerable of all was being everlastingly in the company of one and the same person. To make it worse, Tesman is a specialist, and that is not at all amusing.

Brack. Not even—the specialist one happens to *love?*

Hedda. Faugh—don't use that sickening word.

The Judge is genuinely surprised. He cannot understand why Hedda should have accepted Tesman. She does not see anything wonderful in that. She had danced herself tired; her day was done; Tesman is correctness itself, and she can't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him. Besides, his powers of research, at all events, are untiring, and she sees no reason why he should not one day come to the front after all. Of course, before she married him, she admits, she did expect like every one else that he would attain the highest distinction, and then, he was so bent on being allowed to provide for her.

That was more than Hedda's other adorers were prepared to do for her, she says, assuring Judge Brack that she never cherished any hopes with respect to him. Brack observes that all he requires is a pleasant and intimate interior where he can make himself useful in every way and be free to come and go as—as a trusted friend—of the master of the house, yes; but frankly, of the mistress first of all. Such a triangular friendship really seems to him a great convenience for all parties.

On these long railway journeys, Hedda confesses, she often longed for some one to make a third. And the wedding journey is not over yet by a long, long way; she has only arrived at a station on the line. In that case, says Brack, the passengers jump out and move about a little. But she never jumps out. There is always somebody standing around to look at her ankles. She won't have it, she declares with a gesture of repulsion.

Brack. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple?

Hedda. Ah—that is quite another matter!

Brack. A trusted, sympathetic friend——

Hedda. —with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics——

Brack. —and not the least of a specialist!

Hedda [*with an audible sigh*]. Yes, that would be a relief indeed.

Brack [*hears the front door open, and glances in that direction*]. The triangle is completed.

Hedda [*half aloud*]. And on goes the train.

Tesman comes in with a large number of new books on his special subject. When he goes to the next room Hedda tells Brack how she and Tesman were passing the house once and she said, in pure thoughtlessness, that she should like to live there, and, as often happens, her thoughtlessness had consequences.

Brack. This is exquisite! And you really cared not a rap about it all the time?

Hedda. No, Heaven knows I didn't.

Now she finds she has dropped into genteel poverty. And that is what makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous! He suggests that there may be some stimulating experience in store for her. It won't be Tesman's struggle for the professorship. She will not waste a thought upon that. But what if a solemn responsibility should come upon her? She tells him angrily that she has no turn for that sort of thing. The only thing she has a turn for is boring herself to death.

Judge Brack is going to give a bachelors' party that evening in honor of Tesman's return. Hedda says that if Lövborg calls and won't go to the party he can remain there with her, as Mrs. Elvsted is coming. Then Lövborg can take Mrs. Elvsted home. Brack remarks that his little parties are good only for men with the strictest principles.

Lövborg appears presently. He is slim and lean; of the same age as Tesman, but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of color on the cheekbones. Brack and Tesman tell him at once that they have heard his book very highly praised. He put nothing in it, he says, except what every one would agree with. He means to win a position for himself and make a fresh start, and then he is going to publish his real book, one that he has put his true self into. It will deal with the future.

Tes. With the future! But, good heavens, we know nothing of the future!

Brack. No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same.

He has brought the manuscript with him, thinking he might read a little of it to Tesman. He declines the invita-

tion of Judge Brack very decidedly. Tesman has heard that Lövborg is going to deliver a course of lectures. Lövborg replies that he is, but that he is going to wait until Tesman has received his appointment. It is only the moral victory that he cares for.

Tes. Why, bless me—Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh, yes—I knew it, Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lövborg is not going to stand in our way.

Hedda [*curtly*]. *Our* way? Pray leave me out of the question.

She goes into the next room and gives an order to a servant, who then sets out a decanter and glasses on a tray. Hedda returns and invites the gentlemen to have a glass of cold punch. Judge Brack and Tesman think it won't come amiss, and while they are having a glass in the next room and smoking a cigarette, Hedda and Lövborg sit in the corner farthest from the door and seem to be absorbed in looking at some photographs from the Tyrol. He scarcely takes his eyes from her as he repeats her name over and over, and reproaches her for throwing herself away on Tesman.

Tesman looks in and asks if they won't have a little punch, after all. She tells him to bring some. Again Lövborg protests that he won't have any, but Hedda asks Tesman to pour out two glasses, one for herself and one for Mrs. Elvsted when she comes. Hedda tells Lövborg that she doesn't love Tesman, but she won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness. He asks her if it was not love at the bottom of their old friendship that made her cross-question him about his escapades, as if it might purge his stains away if he made her his confessor.

She asks if it is quite incomprehensible that a young girl should be glad to have a peep into a world which she is forbidden to know anything about. He calls this comradeship in the thirst for life. He does not see why it should not have continued.

Hedda. The fault was yours.

Lövborg. It was you who broke with me.

Hedda. Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lövborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade?

Löv. [*clenching his hands*]. Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

Hedda. Because I have such a dread of scandal.

Löv. Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

She says that the fact that she dared not shoot him down was not her most arrant cowardice that evening.

Mrs. Elvsted arrives. Hedda makes her sit on the other side of her, instead of beside Lövborg, where she would like to be, but Mrs. Elvsted nestles close to Hedda and exclaims that she is so happy because Lövborg says she inspired him.

Löv. And then she is so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

Mrs. E. Good heavens—am I brave?

Löv. Exceedingly—where your comrade is concerned.

Hedda. Ah, yes—courage! If one only had that!

Löv. What then? What do you mean?

Hedda. Then life would perhaps be livable, after all. [*With a sudden change of tone.*] But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

Hedda offers punch, first to Mrs. Elvsted and then to Lövborg. Mrs. Elvsted declines it for both.

Hedda [*looks fixedly at him*]. But if I say you *shall?*

Löv. It would be no use.

Hedda [*laughing*]. Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

Löv. Not in that respect.

Hedda declares very seriously that she thinks he ought to take something so that people could not say he lacks confidence in himself. She says she saw Judge Brack smile contemptuously when he refused before. He is still firm. Hedda then remarks that the terror Mrs. Elvsted was in that morning is evidently without reason.

Löv. [*who has given a start*]. Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

Mrs. E. Oh, my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

Hedda. Don't get excited! That horrid Judge Brack is still watching you.

Löv. So she was in mortal terror! On my account!

Mrs. E. [*softly and piteously*]. Oh, Hedda—now you have ruined everything!

Löv. [*looks fixedly at her for a moment. His face is dis-*

torted]. So that was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

Mrs. E. [*imploringly*]. Oh, my dearest friend—only let me tell you——

Löv. [*takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, husky voice*]. Your health, Thea! [*He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second.*]

Lövborg declares they shall see that if he was fallen once he has risen again. Brack comes in and Lövborg says he will accept the invitation to the Judge's house. He wants to show them one or two things in his new book. He says he will come back again for Mrs. Elvsted. She tries to conceal her anxiety, and says that she will wait until he returns.

Brack. And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

The gentlemen go out. At ten o'clock, Hedda says, Lövborg will come back—with vine leaves in his hair. Mrs. Elvsted is inclined to think Hedda is acting on some hidden motive.

Hedda. Yes, I have. I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.

She says she has not this power and never had it.

Mrs. E. Not your husband's?

Hedda. Do you think *that* is worth the trouble? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made *you* so rich! [*Clasps her passionately in her arms.*] I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

Mrs. E. Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda!

She says she wants to go home alone, at once, but Hedda calls her a "little stupid," and will not permit her to go.

The lamp has burned very low on the table. Mrs. Elvsted is still sitting up, wearily waiting. Hedda lies sleeping, fully dressed, on the sofa. Berta enters and says that it is day. Hedda gets up and draws back the curtains. She thinks at first that Tesman spent the night at his aunts', but a note has come for him from there. Mrs. Elvsted goes reluctantly to the inner room to get some sleep.

When Tesman comes Hedda hears the story of the orgy at Judge Brack's. Early in the evening Lövborg read from his book. Tesman believes it is one of the most remarkable things ever written. Finally they broke up and started home. Lövborg had had far more than was good for him. He dropped the package containing his manuscript without knowing it, and Tesman, who was walking behind, picked it up. He thought he ought to take care of it, and warns Hedda that no one must know about the matter.

The latter part of the night Tesman spent at the quarters of one of his bachelor friends, drinking coffee with some of the others. Some one took Lövborg home, and Tesman says as soon as Lövborg has had his sleep out he will take the manuscript to him. Hedda wants to know if such a thing as the book could be written over again. Tesman thinks the inspiration would be entirely gone. She gives him the note, which announces that his aunt is dying, and he goes off hurriedly.

Further information of the night's adventures is given by Judge Brack. He admits that he had a reason for wanting to keep close track of Lövborg. He asks Hedda if she knows where Lövborg spent the night. She does not, but would like to if it is not quite unmentionable. Lövborg and others attended a particularly lively soirée to which they had been invited in advance, although he had declined the invitation. So he landed at last at the rooms of Mademoiselle Diana.

Hedda. Is she a red-haired woman?

Brack. Precisely.

Hedda. A sort of—a singer?

Brack. Oh, yes—in her leisure moments. And, moreover, a mighty huntress—of men—Mrs. Hedda. You have no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lövborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

It seems that the soirée was broken up by a quarrel. Lövborg accused Mademoiselle Diana or one of her friends of having robbed him. Such a disturbance was created that the police intervened. Lövborg made a violent resistance, struck one of the constables on the head and tore the coat off his back. Henceforth, Judge Brack says, every respectable house will be closed to Lövborg, and Mrs. Tesman cannot afford to receive him.

Brack. Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How superfluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into——

Hedda. —into the triangle?

Brack. Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

Hedda [*looks at him with a smile*]. So you want to be the one cock in the basket*—that is your aim.

Brack [*nods slowly and lowers his voice*]. Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

Hedda [*her smile vanishing*]. I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

Brack. Do you think so?

Hedda. I am beginning to think so. And I am exceedingly glad to think—that you have no sort of hold over me.

Brack [*rising*]. Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed.

Hedda. There I agree with you.

Brack [*laughing equivocally*]. Well, well, Mrs. Hedda—perhaps you are right there. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of?

Hedda. Come, come now, Judge Brack, that sounds almost like a threat.

He says he will go out through the garden, a short cut. And a back way, she reminds him. He has no objection to back ways; they may be piquant at times. When there is practice with ball cartridges going on, she suggests. But one does not shoot their tame poultry, he thinks. Not when there is only one cock in the basket, she answers with a laugh.

She stands looking out through the glass doors for a moment after he has gone and becomes quite serious. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she turns to the writing-table and takes Lövborg's packet out of the bookshelves and is about to look into it when she hears the servant speaking to some one in the hall. She listens a moment and then hastily

* "Eneste hane i kurven"—a proverbial saying.

locks up the packet in a drawer. Eilert Lövborg tears open the door from the hall.

Lövborg has already learned at Mrs. Elvsted's lodgings that she has been out all night. She hears his voice and comes in.

Mrs. E. [*going toward him*]. Ah, Lövborg! At last——!

Löv. Yes, at last. And too late!

Mrs. E. [*looks anxiously at him*]. What is too late?

Löv. Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

Mrs. E. Oh, no, no—don't say that!

Löv. You will say the same when you hear——

Mrs. E. I won't hear anything!

Löv. I want to say that now our ways must part.

Mrs. E. Part!

Hedda [*involuntarily*]. I knew it!

Löv. You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

Mrs. E. How can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now as before? Are we not to go on working together?

Löv. Henceforward I shall do no work.

Mrs. E. [*despairingly*]. Then what am I to do with my life?

He tells her she must go home again, but she says she cannot. She will not let herself be driven away. She will be with him when his book appears.

Löv. [*looks at her*]. My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

Mrs. E. Yes, I feel that it is. And that is why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honor pour in afresh upon you. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

Löv. Thea—our book will never appear.

Hedda. Ah!

Mrs. E. Never appear!

Löv. Can never appear.

Mrs. E. [*in agonized foreboding*]. Lövborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

Hedda [*looks anxiously at him*]. Yes, the manuscript——?

Mrs. E. Where is it?

Löv. Oh, Thea—don't ask me about it!

Mrs. E. Yes, yes, I will know. I demand to be told at once.

Löv. The manuscript—— Well, then—I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

Mrs. E. [*shrieks*]. Oh, no, no——!

Hedda [*involuntarily*]. But that's not——

Löv. [*looks at her*]. Not true you think?

Hedda [*collecting herself*]. Oh, well, of course—since you say so. But it sounded so improbable——

Löv. It is true all the same.

Mrs. E. [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, God—oh, God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

Löv. I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life work to——?

Mrs. Elvsted says that to her dying day she shall think of it as if he had killed a little child. He agrees that it is a sort of child murder.

Mrs. E. How could you, then——! Did not the child belong to me, too?

Hedda [*almost inaudibly*]. Ah, the child——

Mrs. E. [*breathing heavily*]. It is all over then. Well, well, now I will go, Hedda.

Hedda. But you are not going away from town?

Mrs. E. Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*

Lövborg says that Thea has broken his courage and his power of braving life out.

Hedda [*looking straight before her*]. So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him.*] But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly?

He exclaims that she mustn't say it was heartless. He will tell her the truth. He has not torn up the manuscript; he dares not tell Thea, whose pure soul was in the book, that he has lost it and under what circumstances.

Hedda. What path do you mean to take then?

Löv. None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

Hedda [*a step nearer him*]. Eilert Lövborg—listen to me. Will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

She gives him one of the pistols. He thanks her and

MRS. FISKE AS HEDDA

Tes. You can imagine what a state of despair he will be in when he wakens and misses the manuscript.
Hed. Can't such a thing be reproduced? Written over again?
Tes. No, I don't think that would be possible.

goes. She listens for a moment to make sure that he has left the house, and then goes to the writing-table and takes out the packet of manuscript. Next she seats herself in the armchair by the stove. Presently she opens the stove door and then the packet.

Hedda [*throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself*]. Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Burning it, curly-locks! [*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*] Your child and Eilert Lövborg's. [*Throws the rest in.*] I am burning—I am burning your child.

That evening Miss Tesman brings word that her sister has died.

Miss Tesman. Ah, yes, it is the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will be sewing, too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

When her nephew comes in she thinks Hedda may have something to tell him and leaves them. Tesman is greatly concerned about Lövborg, who declares that he has destroyed his manuscript and apparently has gone completely out of his mind. He supposes that Hedda did not give him the packet.

Hedda. No, he did not get it.

Tes. But of course you told him that we had it?

Hedda. No. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

Tes. No; I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

Hedda [*cold and immovable, leaning on the armchair*]. I have not got it.

Tes. Have not got it? What in the world do you mean?

Hedda. I have burnt it—every line of it.

Tes. [*with a violent movement of terror*]. Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

Hedda. Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

Tes. Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible!

Hedda. It is so, nevertheless.

Suppressing an almost imperceptible smile, Hedda says that she burnt the manuscript for his sake; she could not bear the idea that any one should throw him in the shade.

Tes. [*in an outburst of mingled doubt and joy*]. Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you to show your love like that before. Fancy that!

Hedda. Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time—— [*Impatiently, breaking off.*] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you fast enough.

Tes. Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [*Clasps his hands together.*] Great heavens! do you really mean it? Eh?

Hedda. Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

Tes. [*laughing in irrepressible glee*]. The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

Hedda [*clenching her hands together in desperation*]. Oh, it is killing me—it is killing me, all this!

Tes. What is, Hedda? Eh?

Hedda [*coldly, controlling herself*]. All this—absurdity—George.

Tes. Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news? But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

Hedda. Oh, why not that, too?

Tes. No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George, too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

Hedda. When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lövborg's manuscript—for your sake?

Tes. No, bye-the-bye—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much,* Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

Hedda. I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question, too.

Tes. I will, indeed, some time or other. [*Looks uneasy and downcast again.*] And yet the manuscript—the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

Mrs. Elvsted comes in greatly agitated and says she has

*Literally, "That you burn for me."

heard the most incredible rumors about Lövborg. She heard something about the hospital, but people stopped talking when she drew near. She didn't dare to ask them anything, but she went to his lodgings. They said there that they knew nothing about him.

It is Judge Brack who brings word that Lövborg is at the hospital at the point of death. Mrs. Elvsted says she must go to him; she must see him alive. Judge Brack replies it is useless to go as she will not be admitted.

Tes. You don't mean to say that he has himself—— Eh?

Hedda. Yes, I am sure he has.

Tes. Hedda, how can you——?

Brack [*keeping his eyes fixed upon her*]. Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

Mrs. E. Oh, how horrible!

Tes. Himself, then! Fancy that!

Hedda. Shot himself!

Brack. Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

The fact that the wound was in the breast, according to Judge Brack, interests Hedda. She asks if it was not in the temple, but says the breast is a good place, too. Judge Brack then informs them that Lövborg is probably dead already.

Hedda [*in a clear voice*]. At last a deed worth doing!

Tes. [*terrified*]. Good heavens, Hedda! What are you saying?

Hedda. I say there is beauty in this.

Eilert Lövborg has made up his account with life, she says; he has had the courage to do the one right thing. Mrs. Elvsted exclaims that she must never think that; Eilert did it in delirium, just as he tore up the manuscript.

Tes. [*moving about the room*]. To think of Eilert going out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalized his name——

Mrs. E. Oh, if only it could be put together again!

Tes. Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I would not give——

Mrs. E. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

Not only has Mrs. Elvsted kept all the loose notes that Lövborg dictated the book from, but she put them in the handbag that she brought from home and now has with

her. Tesman at once suggests that they put their heads together and try to restore the book from the notes. He says he will dedicate his life to the task.

Hedda. You, George? Your life?

Tes. Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

Tesman and Mrs. Elvsted go into the back room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers. Hedda crosses to the stove and sits in the armchair. Presently Brack goes up to her.

Hedda [*in a low voice*]. Oh, what a sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lövborg's.

Brack. Freedom, Mrs. Hedda? Well, of course, it is a release for him——

Hedda. I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

Judge Brack asks her if Lövborg was not more to her than she is willing to admit to herself. She replies that she does not answer such questions. Lövborg had the courage to live his life after his own fashion, she says, and then had the will and the strength to turn away from the banquet of life so early! Judge Brack tells her he is sorry to have to dispel an amiable illusion.

In the first place, Lövborg is already dead. He was found shot in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir, apparently by accident, for the pistol had gone off in his pocket. Also, the wound was in the bowels. Another disagreeable point is the pistol. Judge Brack thinks he must have stolen it. Hedda leaps up indignantly, but just then Tesman and Mrs. Elvsted return to work under a better light. Hedda gets something from the drawer of the writing-desk, holding several sheets of music over it, takes it into the back room, and returns at once.

Judge Brack cross-examines Hedda in a low voice about the pistol. The police have it now. The possibility that the weapon was stolen would make things look a little better, he seems to think, but Hedda says, "Death rather than that." If there is to be a scandal, Brack points out, Hedda and Mademoiselle Diana will be brought before the

court to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder.

Brack. Well, fortunately, there is no danger so long as I say nothing.

Hedda [*looks up at him*]. So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call from this time forward.

Brack [*whispers softly*]. Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

Hedda. I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave, then! [*Rises impetuously.*] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

Brack [*looks half mockingly at her*]. People generally get used to the inevitable.

Hedda returns his look and then goes to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she asks how they are getting on, imitating her husband's intonations. He says the work will take months.

Hedda [*still mockingly*]. Fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through* MRS. ELVSTED'S *hair.*] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here you are sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lövborg?

Mrs. E. Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way!

Hedda. Oh, that will come, too—in time.

Tes. Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

Hedda. Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

Tes. Yes, do, dear—eh?

[HEDDA *goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.*]

Mrs. E. [*starts from her chair*]. Oh—what is that?

Tes. [*runs to the doorway*]. Why, my dearest Hedda—don't play dance music to-night! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert, too!

Hedda [*puts her head out between the curtains*]. And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them—— After this I will be quiet. [*Closes the curtains again.*]

Tes. [*at the writing-table.*] It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted —you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I will come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work there—eh?

Hedda [*in the inner room*]. I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am *I* to get through the evenings out here?

Tes. [*turning over the papers*]. Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

Brack [*in the armchair, calls out gaily*]. Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We shall get on capitally together, we two!

Hedda [*speaking loud and clear*]. Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are the one cock in the basket——

[*A shot is heard within.* TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, *and* BRACK *leap to their feet.*]

Tes. Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again. [*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by* MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA *lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries.* BERTA *enters in alarm from the right.*]

Tes. [*shrieks to* BRACK]. Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

Brack [*half fainting in the armchair*]. Good God!—people don't do such things.

PÉLLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE*

By Maurice Maeterlinck

First played in Paris in 1892.

Golaud, a king's son and a great hunter, brings home for wife a young princess whom he found in a forest. She and Golaud's younger brother fall in love with each other and strive to suppress their passion. Are they mastered by love, and does Golaud take vengeance?

While hunting in the depths of a great forest Golaud finds a young girl weeping by a spring. She is dressed like a princess but her garments are torn by briers. A crown has fallen from her head and lies shimmering in the water. Golaud sees that she is very beautiful. At first she does not hear him, and when he touches her on the shoulder she springs up in fright and starts to flee. He persuades her to wait, but she says if he touches her she will throw herself in the water. He asks if any one has hurt her.

Between her sobs she replies that she has been hurt by every one, but will not say what has happened or whence she has fled, except that it was from far, far away. She will not let him touch the crown; she will have no more of it; she would rather die at once. At last she asks him who he is.

Golaud. I am Prince Golaud—grandson of Arkël, the old King of Allemonde. . . .

Mélisande. Oh, you have gray hairs already. . . .

Gol. Yes; some, here, by the temples . . .

Mél. And in your beard, too. . . . Why do you look at me so?

Gol. I am looking at your eyes.—Do you never shut your eyes?

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*Translated by Richard Hovey. Published by Dodd, Mead & Co. Copyright, 1896, by Stone & Kimball.

Mél. Oh, yes; I shut them at night. . . .
Gol. Why do you look so astonished?
Mél. You are a giant?
Gol. I am a man like the rest. . . .
Mél. Why have you come here?

He tells her that he was chasing a wild boar and mistook the way. He has difficulty in persuading her to come away from the spring, where he says she cannot remain alone all night. Finally she consents to go away with him, and tells him that her name is Mélisande.

Arkël is sitting with his daughter, Geneviève, in a hall of his castle in Allemonde, reading a letter that Golaud has written to Pélléas, his half-brother, telling how he found Mélisande in a forest. It is six months since he married her, and he knows no more about her than the first time he saw her, and dares not question her.

Golaud asks Pélléas to prepare the way for his return, for he has undone all his grandfather's plans of state by his marriage. If Arkël will receive Mélisande as his own daughter, he tells Pélléas, on the third night following the letter, to light a lamp at the top of the tower overlooking the sea. He will perceive it from his ship; otherwise he will go far away again and return no more.

Arkël says that although he is very old he has never seen clearly for one moment into himself, and therefore will not judge what others have done. Golaud is past the age to marry, and he weds, like a child, a little girl that he finds by a spring. . . . That may seem strange because they never see the reverse of their destinies. He thinks Golaud knows his own future best, and that perhaps there happen no useless events.

Pélléas enters. He has received another letter. It is from his friend Marcellus, who is about to die and would see Pélléas before dying. Arkël says that Pélléas must wait for a little while for Golaud's return. They do not know what his return may have in store for them, and besides, he says, Pélléas's own father lies there in the castle, more sick perhaps than his friend.

When Mélisande comes she finds it gloomy in the old castle, and the great forests oppress her. Geneviève tells her that they astonished her, too, when she first came there

nearly forty years before. There are places where one never sees the sun, but one gets used to it quickly. They are standing before the castle, and she tells Mélisande to look toward the other side and she will have the light of the sea. Pélléas joins them, and they watch a great ship putting to sea as night falls. Pélléas says there is going to be a storm. Perhaps the next day he will go away.

Pélléas takes Mélisande to a fountain in the park where he often goes to sit toward noon when it is too hot in the gardens. He says that it was considered a miraculous spring that opened the eyes of the blind, but since the king has been nearly blind himself no one comes any more.

Mél. How alone one is here! . . . There is no sound.

Pélléas. There is always a wonderful silence here. . . . One could hear the water sleep. . . . Will you sit down on the edge of the marble basin? There is one linden where the sun never comes. . . .

Mél. I am going to lie down on the marble.—I should like to see the bottom of the water. . . .

Pél. No one has ever seen it.—It is as deep, perhaps, as the sea.—It is not known whence it comes.—Perhaps it comes from the bottom of the earth. . . .

Mél. If there were anything shining at the bottom perhaps one could see it. . . .

Pél. Do not lean over so. . . .

Mél. I would like to touch the water. . . .

Pél. Have a care of slipping. . . . I will hold your hand. . . .

Mél. No, no, I would plunge both hands in it. . . . You would say my hands were sick to-day. . . .

Pél. Oh! oh! take care! take care! Mélisande! . . . Mélisande! . . . Oh! your hair! . . .

Mél. [*starting upright*]. I cannot . . . I cannot reach it. . . .

Pél. Your hair dipped in the water. . . .

Mél. Yes, it is longer than my arms. . . . It is longer than I. . . .

[*A silence.*]

Pél. It was at the brink of a spring, too, that he found you?

Mél. Yes. . . .
Pél. What did he say to you?
Mél. Nothing—I no longer remember. . . .
Pél. Was he quite near you?
Mél. Yes; he would have kissed me.
Pél. And you would not?
Mél. No.
Pél. Why would you not?
Mél. Oh! oh! I saw something pass at the bottom of the water. . . .
Pél. Take care! take care!—You will fall! What are you playing with?
Mél. With the ring he gave me. . . .
Pél. Take care; you will lose it. . . .
Mél. No, no; I am sure of my hands. . . .
Pél. Do not play so, over so deep a water. . . .
Mél. My hands do not tremble.

She tosses the ring in the air, catching it again, but once she tosses it up toward the sun so that she cannot see it and it falls in the water. She is greatly distressed, but Pélléas sees no reason why she should be so troubled about a ring. If they do not find it, he says, they will find another. She replies that they will never find it again, or any others either.

They will come back and look for it another day, he tells her, for it is time to go now. It was striking noon at the moment the ring fell. She asks what they shall say to Golaud if he asks where it is, and Pélléas answers, "The truth, the truth, the truth. . . ."

While Golaud was hunting all at once his horse ran away without cause. He had just heard the twelve strokes of noon. He is telling Mélisande about it as he lies upon his bed. At the twelfth stroke the horse suddenly took fright and ran like a blind madman against a tree. He heard no more. The horse must have fallen on him. But now he thinks he did not get a serious hurt. He was made of blood and iron and is not hurt so easily.

Mélisande tells him to close his eyes and try to sleep, and she will remain by him all night. He does not wish her to tire herself. Then he asks why she weeps all at once. She bursts into tears. She does not know what ails her, she says. But she is not happy there. She feels that she

can live there no longer. That she must go away or she will die.

Golaud questions her, urging her to tell him the whole truth, if it is the king, or his mother, or Pélléas. Again and again she says that she does not know what it is; she would tell him if she could. He asks if it is he she would leave. She replies it is not that. She would go away with him. It is there she can live no longer. She feels that she shall not live a long while. Trying to comfort her, he takes her hands and sees that the ring is gone.

Mélisande hesitates. She says she thinks the ring must have fallen, but she knows where it is. He asks where, and she says in a grotto by the shore where she was picking up shells. He tells her she must go and look for it now in the dark, that he had rather have lost all than have lost that ring. She does not know what it is. She does not know whence it came. The sea will be very high that night. The sea will come and take the ring before her. He tells her to make haste.

Taking Pélléas with her, Mélisande comes to the mouth of the grotto.

Pél. [*speaking with great agitation*]. Yes; it is here; we are there. It is so dark you cannot tell the entrance of the grotto from the rest of the night. . . . There are no stars on this side. Let us wait till the moon has torn through that great cloud; it will light up the whole grotto, and then we can enter without danger. There are dangerous places, and the path is very narrow between two lakes whose bottom has not yet been found. I did not think to bring a torch or a lantern, but I think the light of the sky will be enough for us—You haven't ever gone into this grotto?

Mél. No. . . .

Pél. Let us go in; let us go in. . . . You must be able to describe the place where you lost the ring if he questions you. . . . It is very big and very beautiful. There are stalactites that look like plants and men. It is full of blue darks. It has not yet been explored to the end. There are great treasures hidden there, it seems. You will see the remains of ancient shipwrecks there. But you must not go far in it without a guide. There have been some who never have come back. I myself dare not

go forward too far. We will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the sea or the sky. When you strike a little light there you would say the vault was covered with stars like the sky. It is bits of crystal or salt, they say, that shine so in the rock.—Look, look, I think the sky is going to clear. . . . Give me your hand; do not tremble, do not tremble so. There is no danger; we will stop the moment we no longer see the light of the sea. . . . . Is it the noise of the grotto that frightens you? It is the noise of night or the noise of silence. . . . Do you hear the sea behind us?—It does not seem happy to-night. . . . Ah! look, the light! . . .

The moon lights up abundantly the entrance and part of the darkness of the grotto; and at a certain depth are seen three old beggars with white hair, seated side by side, leaning upon each other and asleep against a bowlder.

Mél. Let us go! . . . Let us go! . . .

Pél. Yes . . . it is three old poor men fallen asleep. . . . There is a famine in the country. . . . Why have they come to sleep here?

Mél. Let us go! . . . Come, come . . . let us go! . . .

Pél. Take care; do not speak so loud. . . . Let us not wake them . . . they are still sleeping heavily. . . . Come.

Mél. Leave me, leave me; I prefer to walk alone. . . .

Pél. We will come back another day. . . .

Mélisande is spinning in an apartment in the castle. Pélléas is there also. Golaud has not come back from the chase. They think everybody else is asleep in the castle. Mélisande is startled by a knock at the door. Yniold, Golaud's little son, comes in. He says he does not want to go to bed before they do, and bursting into sobs takes refuge by Mélisande. She asks him why he is crying, and he says because she is going way. His father does not come back, and now she is going away, too. She assures him there has never been any thought of that, but he declares he has seen it. Pélléas thinks he has been dreaming.

Yniold thinks he sees something out of the window and Pélléas and Mélisande run and look but find nothing there. They think he must have seen the light of the moon which

makes queer reflections on the forest. Then Yniold says his father is coming into the courtyard. He runs out, and comes back presently bringing a lamp and accompanied by Golaud. Lifting the lamp and looking at Mélisande, he says she has been weeping. And then looking at Pélléas in turn, he says he has been weeping, too. Golaud tells him not to hold the light under their eyes so.

At a window in a tower Mélisande stands in the moonlight singing and combing her unbound hair:

My long locks fall foaming
To the threshold of the tower—
My locks await your coming
All along the tower,
And all along the long, long hour,—
And all along the long, long hour.

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël,
Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël.

I was born on a Sunday,
A Sunday at high noon . . .

Pélléas appears on a watchman's round that runs beneath the window. He calls to her and asks her what she is doing there at the window, singing like a bird that is not native there. She replies that she is doing her hair for the night, and has opened the window because it is hot in the tower. She sees it is a beautiful night. Pélléas says he has never seen so many stars before, and the moon is shining on the sea. He asks her to lean forward a little till he sees her unbound hair. She says she is frightful so, but leans out of the window.

Pél. Oh! Oh! Mélisande! . . . Oh, thou art beautiful! . . . thou art beautiful so! . . . Lean out! lean out! . . . Let me come nearer thee. . . .

Mél. I cannot come nearer thee . . . I am leaning out as far as I can . . .

Pél. I cannot come up higher; . . . give me at least thy hand to-night . . . before I go away. . . . I leave to-morrow. . . .

Mél. No, no, no! . . .

Pél. Yes, yes, yes; I leave, I shall leave to-morrow.

. . . Give me thy hand, thy hand, thy little hand upon my lips. . . .

Mél. I give thee not my hand if thou wilt leave. . . .

Pél. Give, give, give! . . .

Mél. Thou wilt not leave? . . .

Pél. I will wait; I will wait. . . .

Mél. I see a rose in the shadows. . . .

Pél. Where? . . . I see only the boughs of the willow hanging over the wall. . . .

Mél. Farther down, farther down, in the garden; farther down, in the sombre green. . . .

Pél. It is not a rose. . . . I will go see by and by, but give me thy hand first; first thy hand. . . .

Mél. There, there; . . . I cannot lean out farther. . . .

Pél. I cannot reach thy hand with my lips. . . .

Mél. I cannot lean out farther. . . . I am on the point of falling. . . . Oh! oh! my hair is falling down the tower! . . . [*Her tresses fall suddenly over her head, as she is leaning out so, and stream over* PÉLLÉAS.]

Pél. Oh! oh! what is it? . . . Thy hair, thy hair is falling down to me! . . . All thy locks, Mélisande, all thy locks have fallen down the tower! . . . I hold them in my hands; I hold them in my mouth. . . . I hold them in my arms; I put them about my neck. . . . I will not open my hands again to-night. . . .

Mél. Let me go! let me go! . . . Thou wilt make me fall! . . .

Pél. No, no, no; . . . I have never seen such hair as thine, Mélisande! . . . See, see, see; it comes from so high and yet it floods me to the heart! . . . And yet it floods me to the knees! . . . And it is sweet, sweet as if it fell from heaven! . . . I see the sky no longer through thy locks. Thou seest, thou seest? . . . I can no longer hold them with both hands; there are some on the boughs of the willow. . . . They are alive like birds in my hands, . . . and they love me, they love me more than thou! . . .

Mél. Let me go; let me go! . . . Some one might come. . . .

Pél. No, no, no; I shall not set thee free to-night.

. . . Thou art my prisoner to-night; all night, all night! . . .

Mél. Pélléas! Pélléas! . . .

Pél. I tie them, I tie them to the willow boughs. . . . Thou shalt not go away now; . . . thou shalt not go away now. . . . Look, look, I am kissing thy hair. . . . I suffer no more in the midst of thy hair. . . . Hearest thou my kisses along thy hair? . . . They mount along thy hair. . . . Each hair must bring thee some. . . . Thou seest, thou seest, I can open my hands. . . . My hands are free, and thou canst not leave me now. . . .

Doves come out of the tower and fly about them in the night. Mélisande is afraid they will be lost in the dark. She tells him to let her go. She hears a noise of footsteps. It is Golaud. She believes it is he, and that he has heard them. Pélléas says her hair is caught about the boughs in the darkness. Golaud enters by the watchman's round.

Gol. What do you here?

Pél. What do I here? . . . I . . .

Gol. You are children. . . . Mélisande, do not lean out so at the window; you will fall. . . . Do you not know it is late?—It is nearly midnight.—Do not play so in the darkness.—You are children. . . . [*Laughing nervously.*] What children. . . . What children! . . . .

The next day Golaud takes Pélléas down into the vaults under the castle. They find their way into a succession of enormous crypts that seem almost endless. Golaud asks Pélléas if he smells the deadly odor that reigns there. That is what he wished to show him. He believes it comes from an underground lake that he wishes Pélléas to see. They walk on in silence by the light of a lantern that Golaud carries, taking care not to slip into the chasms that lie about them. Suddenly Golaud cries to Pélléas to stop, and seizes him by the arm. One step more, he says, and Pélléas would have been in the gulf.

Below them is the stagnant water that Golaud spoke of. He asks if Pélléas does not perceive the smell of death that rises. He says they will go to the end of an overhanging rock, and Pélléas shall lean over, when it will strike him in the face. This he says it is that has poisoned the castle

on certain days. The King does not believe it comes from there, but Golaud thinks the place should be walled up. He points out lizards crawling on the walls and pillars of the vaults. The whole castle will be swallowed up one of these nights, he says, unless it is looked out for. Again he asks if Pélléas does not perceive the smell of death that rises.

Pél. Yes; there is a smell of death rising about us. . . .

Gol. Lean over; have no fear. . . . I will hold you . . . give me . . . no, no, not your hand . . . it might slip . . . your arm, your arm! . . . Do you see the gulf? [*Moved.*] Pélléas? Pélléas?

Pél. Yes; I think I see the bottom of the gulf. . . . Is it the light that trembles so? . . . You . . . [*He straightens up, turns and looks at* GOLAUD.]

Gol. [*with a trembling voice*]. Yes; it is the lantern. . . . See, I shook it to lighten the walls. . . .

Pél. I stifle here; . . . let us go out. . . .

Golaud and Pélléas come out on a terrace into the open air. For a moment, Pélléas says, he was going to be sick in the crypts; he was on the point of falling. Now he smells the air of all the sea, and the smell of the verdure and the wet roses at the foot of the terrace. It is nearly noon. They hear bells ringing, and children crying out as they go down to the beach to bathe. Pélléas sees their mother, with Mélisande, at a window of the tower.

Speaking of Mélisande, Golaud says, he heard what passed between them the night before. Mélisande is very young and very impressionable, he proceeds, and must be treated the more circumspectly that she is perhaps with child; the least emotion might bring on a mishap. It is not the first time he has noticed there might be something between them. Pélléas is the older; it will suffice to have told him, he says. He wants Pélléas to avoid her as much as possible, but without affectation. He points out a herd on the highway toward the forest. They are crying out like lost children, he says, as if they smelt the butcher already.

Little Yniold is playing before the castle. Golaud finding him there asks him if his little mother is often with his Uncle Pélléas. Yniold replies she always is when

his father is away. Golaud asks if it is true that they often quarrel. The child says it is; they quarrel about the door, because it will not stay open. Golaud tries to learn more about this, but the child's mind wanders from one thing to another. He says they quarrel about the light.

Yniold begins to cry, complaining that his father squeezed his little arm. Golaud promises him a quiver and some arrows if he will not cry, and asks why Pélléas and Mélisande do not want the door open, and what they talk about. Yniold says they always talk about him.

Gol. They never tell you to go and play somewhere else?

Yniold. No, little father; they are afraid when I am not there.

Gol. They are afraid? . . . What makes you think they are afraid?

Yni. Little mother always says, "Don't go away; don't go away!" . . . They are unhappy, but they laugh. . . .

Gol. But that does not prove they are afraid.

Yni. Yes, yes, little father; she is afraid. . . .

Gol. Why do you say she is afraid?

Yni. They always weep in the dark.

Yniold says the little mother is very pale. No, they do not kiss, he answers in reply to a question, but then corrects himself, for they did kiss once. He kisses his father on the mouth to show him. His father's beard pricks, and he says it is getting all gray. The window under which they are sitting is lighted up at this moment, and the light falls upon them. Yniold wants to go in, but Golaud lifts him up so that he can look into the window, telling him not to make any noise, lest he frighten the little mother, and asks if she is there.

Gol. She is alone?

Yni. Yes; . . . no, no; Uncle Pélléas is there, too.

Gol. He . . . !

Yni. Ah! ah! little father! you have hurt me! . . .

Gol. It is nothing; be still; I will not do it any more; look, look, Yniold! . . . I stumbled; speak lower. What are they doing?

Yni. They are not doing anything, little father; they are waiting for something.

Gol. Are they near each other?

Yni. No, little father.

Gol. And . . . and the bed? are they near the bed?

Yni. The bed, little father?—I can't see the bed.

Gol. Lower, lower; they will hear you. Are they speaking?

Yni. No, little father; they do not speak.

Gol. But what are they doing?—They must be doing something. . . .

Yni. They are looking at the light.

Gol. Both?

Yni. Yes, little father.

Gol. They do not say anything?

Yni. No, little father; they do not close their eyes.

Gol. They do not come near each other?

Yni. No, little father; they do not stir.

Gol. They are sitting down?

Yni. No, little father; they are standing upright against the wall.

Gol. They make no gestures?—They do not look at each other?—They make no signs? . . .

Yni. No, little father.—Oh! oh! little father; they never close their eyes. . . . I am terribly afraid. . . .

Gol. Be still. They do not stir yet?

Yni. No, little father.—I am afraid, little father; let me come down! . . .

Gol. Why, what are you afraid of?—Look! look! . . .

Yni. I dare not look any more, little father! . . . Let me come down! . . .

Gol. Look! look! . . .

Yni. Oh! oh! I am going to cry, little father!—Let me come down! let me come down! . . .

Gol. Come; we will go see what has happened.

[*Exeunt.*

On the following day Pélléas meeting Mélisande passing through a corridor of the castle tells her hastily that he must speak to her that night, for now his father is getting well and he is going away. And yet he has had some presentiment that the day would end ill. He has had a rumor of misfortune in his ears for some time. His father told him that he had the grave and friendly look of those who will not live long, and said that he must travel.

They agree to meet that night in the park near the "Blind Man's Spring." It will be the last night, and she will not see him more. He must not say that, she replies, for she will see him always; she will look upon him always. He answers that she will look in vain; he will be so far away she could no longer see him. He says abruptly that he hears some one behind the door near which they are standing. He thinks it is some strangers who have been at the castle. They go in different directions.

Arkël has noticed that Mélisande has seemed unhappy. He tells her he has observed that she was listless, but with that strange, astray look of one awaiting ever a great trouble. He cannot explain, but it was sad to see her so. Golaud enters.

Gol. Pélléas leaves to-night.

Arkël. Thou hast blood on thy forehead.—What hast thou done?

Gol. Nothing, nothing. . . . I have passed through a hedge of thorns.

Mél. Bend down your head a little, my lord. . . . I will wipe your forehead.

Gol. [*repulsing her*]. I will not that you touch me, do you understand? Go, go!—I am not speaking to you.—Where is my sword?—I came to seek my sword. . . .

Mél. Here; on the praying-stool.

Gol. Bring it. [*To* ARKËL.] They have just found another peasant dead of hunger, along by the sea. You would say they all meant to die under our eyes. [*To* MÉLISANDE.] Well, my sword?—Why do you tremble so?—I am not going to kill you. I would simply examine the blade. I do not employ the sword for these uses. Why do you examine me like a beggar?—I do not come to ask alms of you. You hope to see something in my eyes without my seeing anything in yours?—Do you think I may know something?—[*To* ARKËL.]—Do you see those great eyes?—It is as if they were proud of their richness. . . .

Arkël. I see there only a great innocence. . . .

Gol. A great innocence! . . . . They are greater than innocence! . . . They are purer than the eyes of a lamb. . . . They would give God lessons in innocence! A great innocence! Listen: I am so near them

I feel the freshness of their lashes when they wink; and yet I am less far away from the great secrets of the other world than from the smallest secret of those eyes! . . . A great innocence! . . . More than innocence! You would say the angels of heaven celebrated there an eternal baptism! . . . I know those eyes! I have seen them at their work! Close them! close them! or I shall close them for a long while! . . . . Do not put your right hand to your throat so; I am saying a very simple thing. . . . I have no under thought. . . . If I had an under thought, why should I not say it? Ah! ah!—do not attempt to flee!—Here!—Give me that hand!—Ah! your hands are too hot. . . . Go away! Your flesh disgusts me! . . . Here!—There is no more question of fleeing now!—[*He seizes her by the hair.*]—You shall follow me on your knees!—On your knees!—On your knees before me!—Ah! ah! your long hair serves some purpose at last! . . . Right, . . . left!—Left, . . . right!—Absalom! Absalom.—Forward! Back! To the ground! To the ground! . . . You see, you see; I laugh already like an old man. . . .

Arkël [*running up*]. Golaud! . . .

Gol. [*affecting a sudden calm*]. You will do as you may please, look you.—I attach no importance to that.—I am too old; and, besides, I am not a spy. I shall await chance; and then . . . Oh! then! . . . simply because it is the custom; simply because it is the custom. . . .

[*Exit.*

Arkël. What ails him?—He is drunk?

Mél. [*in tears*]. No, no; he does not love me any more. . . . I am not happy! . . . I am not happy! . . .

Arkël. If I were God I would have pity on men's hearts. . . .

In the evening Pélléas is the first to come to the fountain in the park. He feels that he shall flee, crying out for joy and woe like a blind man fleeing from his burning house. But it is late and she does not come. He thinks he should do better to go away without seeing her again. Yet he must see her one last time, to the bottom of her heart. He must tell her all that he has never told her. She comes into the garden.

At first he warns her not to stand in the light, lest they

SCENE FROM PELLEAS AND MELISANDE

Gol. You shall follow me on your knees! On your knees! -- On your knees before me!

be seen. She replies that she wishes to be seen. She was able to come because Golaud slept. They must be careful, for in an hour the gates will be closed and they might be shut out. He tells her to come nearer to him, and she asks why he says he must go away forever.

Pél. I must tell thee what thou knowest already?—thou knowest not what I am going to tell thee?

Mél. Why, no; why, no; I know nothing— . . .

Pél. Thou knowest not why I must go afar. . . . Thou knowest not it is because . . . [*He kisses her abruptly.*] I love thee. . . .

Mél. [*in a low voice*]. I love thee, too. . . .

Pél. Oh! oh! What saidst thou, Mélisande? . . . I hardly heard it! . . . Thou sayest that in a voice coming from the end of the world! . . . I hardly heard thee. . . . Thou lovest me?—Thou lovest me, too? . . . Since when lovest thou me? . . .

Mél. Since always. . . . Since I saw thee . . .

Pél. Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice seems to have blown across the sea in spring! . . . I have never heard it until now; . . . one would say it had rained on my heart! . . . Thou sayest that so frankly! . . . Like an angel questioned! . . . I cannot believe it, Mélisande! . . . Why shouldst thou love me? Nay, why dost thou love me?—Is what thou sayest true?—Thou dost not mock me?—Thou dost not lie a little, to make me smile? . . .

She replies that she never lies. She lies but to his brother. Her voice, he says, is cooler and more frank than the water is. It is like pure water on his lips, on his hands. He takes her hands. He did not know how beautiful she was, he says. He had never seen anything so beautiful before her. He was full of unrest; he sought throughout the house, throughout the country, and he found not beauty. And now he has found her. He does not think there could be on earth a fairer woman. He tells her to come into the light, so little time remains, that they may see how happy they are. She says she is nearer him in the dark.

Although happy, she says she is sad. She weeps always when she thinks of him. He tells her that he weeps, too, when he thinks of her. Now he weeps for joy. He kisses

her again. She is strange when he kisses her so, he says. She is so beautiful that one would think she was about to die. He hears a noise. They are closing the gates.

Pél. We cannot go back now!—Hearest thou the bolts? —Listen! listen! . . . the great chains! . . . the great chains! . . . It is too late; it is too late!

Mél. All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

Pél. Thou—. . . Behold, behold! . . . It is no longer we who will it so! . . . All's lost, all's saved! all is saved to-night!—Come, come. . . . My heart beats like a madman—up to my very throat. [*They embrace.*] Listen! listen! my heart is almost strangling me. . . . Come! come! . . . Ah, how beautiful it is in the shadows! . . .

Mél. There is some one behind us! . . .

Pél. I see no one. . . .

Mél. I heard a noise. . . .

Pél. I hear only thy heart in the dark. . . .

Mél. I heard the crackling of dead leaves. . . .

Pél. Because the wind is silent all at once. . . . It fell as we were kissing. . . .

Mél. How long our shadows are to-night! . . .

Pél. They embrace to the very end of the garden. Oh, how they kiss far away from us! . . . Look! look! . . .

Mél. [*in a stifled voice*]. A-a-h!—He is behind a tree!

Pél. Who?

Mél. Golaud!

Pél. Golaud!—where?—I see nothing. . . .

Mél. There . . . at the end of our shadows. . .

Pél. Yes, yes; I saw him. . . . Let us not turn abruptly. . . .

Mél. He has his sword. . . .

Pél. I have not mine. . . .

Mél. He saw us kiss. . . .

Pél. He does not know we have seen him. . . . Do not stir; do not turn your head. . . . He would rush headlong on us. . . . He will remain there while he thinks we do not know. He watches us. . . . He is still motionless. . . . Go, go at once this way . . . I will wait for him. . . . I will stop him. . . .

Mél. No, no, no! . . .

Pél. Go! go! he has seen all! . . . He will kill us! . . .

Mél. All the better! all the better! all the better! . . .

Pél. He comes! he comes! . . . Thy mouth! . . . Thy mouth! . . .

Mél. Yes! . . . yes! yes! . . .

[*They kiss desperately.*]

Pél. Oh! oh! All the stars are falling! . . .

Mél. Upon me, too! upon me, too! . . .

Pél. Again! Again! . . . Give! give! . . .

Mél. All! all! all! . . .

Golaud rushes upon them, sword in hand, and strikes Pélléas, who falls at the brink of the fountain. Mélisande flees terrified.

Mél. [*fleeing*]. Oh! oh! I have no courage! . . . I have no courage! . . .

[GOLAUD *pursues her through the wood in silence.*]

The women servants are gathered in a lower hall of the castle. One of them is telling how she found Mélisande and Golaud, that morning when she opened the gate, stretched on the steps. Golaud's sword was still in his side, and there was blood on the sill. Now it seems that Golaud is nearly cured. He cannot yet walk alone, but they have just helped him to go to his wife's room. He is so big, they say, that he could not kill himself. But she is hardly wounded, and it is she who is going to die.

An old servant saw Mélisande's wound. It was a tiny little wound, she says, under her little left breast, a little wound that would not kill a pigeon. She was delivered of a babe three days ago. The old servant tells them it was a wee little girl a beggar would not bring into the world, a little wax figure that came much too soon. It is not happiness that has come into the house, she says.

No one knows where the good Lord Pélléas is, says one. The old servant returns that everybody knows, but nobody dares speak of it. *She* knows he was found at the bottom of the Blind Man's Spring.

In an apartment of the castle Mélisande is stretched upon a bed, and Arkël, Golaud, and the physician are in a corner. The physician is saying that it cannot be of the little wound she is dying. A bird would not have died of it.

And it is not Golaud then who killed her. He must not be so disconsolate. She was born without reason and dies without reason.

Golaud replies that he killed her without cause. It is enough to make the stones weep. They had kissed like little children, simply kissed. They were brother and sister. And he at once killed them, in spite of himself. The physician says she is waking.

Mélisande wishes the window open, and asks if it is not sunset. At first she thinks she is alone in the room with Arkël. He prepares her for seeing Golaud, but she inquires why he does not come by her. Golaud drags himself toward the bed, calling desperately upon her name.

Mél. Is it you, Golaud? I should hardly recognize you any more. . . . It is the evening sunlight in my eyes. . . . Why look you on the walls? You have grown thin and old. . . . Is it a long while since we saw each other?

Gol. [*to* ARKËL *and the* PHYSICIAN]. Will you withdraw a moment, if you please, if you please? . . . I will leave the door wide open. . . . One moment only. . . . I would say something to her; else I could not die. . . . Will you?—Go clear to the end of the corridor; you can come back at once, at once. . . . Do not refuse me this. . . . I am a wretch. . . .

[*Exit* ARKËL *and the* PHYSICIAN.

Mélisande, hast thou pity on me, as I have pity on thee? . . . Mélisande? . . . Dost thou forgive me, Mélisande? . . .

Mél. Yes, yes, I do forgive thee. . . . What must I forgive? . . .

Gol. I have wrought thee so much ill, Mélisande. . . . I cannot tell thee the ill I have wrought thee. . . . But I see it, I see it so clearly to-day . . . since the first day. . . . And all I did not know till now leaps in my eyes to-night. . . . And it is all my fault, all that has happened, all that will happen. . . . If I could tell it, thou wouldst see as I do! . . . I see all! I see all! . . . But I loved thee so! . . . I loved thee so! . . . But now there is some one dying. . . . It is I who am dying. . . . And I would know . . . I would ask thee. . . . Thou'lt bear

me no ill-will . . . I would . . . The truth must be told to a dying man. . . . He must know the truth, or else he could not sleep. . . . Swearest thou to tell me the truth?

Mél. Yes.

Gol. Didst thou love Pélléas?

Mél. Why, yes; I loved him.—Where is he?

Gol. Thou dost not understand me?—Thou wilt not understand me?—It seems to me . . . it seems to me. . . . Well, then, here: I ask thee if thou lovedst him with a forbidden love? . . . Wert thou . . . were you guilty? Say, say, yes, yes, yes! . . .

Mél. No, no; we were not guilty.—Why do you ask that?

Gol. Mélisande! . . . tell me the truth, for the love of God!

Mél. Why, have I not told the truth?

Gol. Do not lie so any more, at the moment of death!

Mél. Who is dying?—Is it I?

Gol. Thou, thou! and I, I, too, after thee! . . . And we must have the truth. . . . We must have the truth at last, dost thou understand? . . . Tell me all! Tell me all! I forgive thee all! . . .

Mél. Why am I going to die?—I did not know it. . . .

Gol. Thou knowest it now! . . . It is time! It is time! . . . Quick! quick! . . . The truth! the truth! . . .

Mél. The truth . . . the truth . . .

Gol. Where art thou?—Mélisande!—Where art thou? —It is not natural! Mélisande! Where art thou?—Where goest thou? [*Perceiving* ARKËL *and the* PHYSICIAN *at the door of the room.*]—Yes, yes; you may come in. . . . I know nothing; it is useless. . . . It is too late; she is already too far away from us. . . . I shall never know! . . . I shall die here like a blind man! . . .

Mélisande asks if it is true that winter is beginning, for she says it is beginning to be cold and there are no more leaves. She will not have the window closed, however, until the sun be at the bottom of the sea. She does not like the winter, she is so afraid of the great cold. Arkël

tells her that she has brought a little daughter into the world, and holds the child up. Mélisande sees that it is little. It does not laugh; she says it is going to weep, too, and she pities it.

The room has been invaded little by little by the women servants of the castle, who range themselves in silence along the walls and wait. Golaud asks them why they come in, saying no one sent for them, but they make no answer. Arkël cautions him not to speak so loud, for she has closed her eyes. They are full of tears, and she stretches out her arms. The physician thinks that it is without doubt toward the child.

Once again Golaud begs to be left alone with her. There is something he must say to her, but Arkël tells him to trouble her no more; the human soul is very silent, and likes to depart alone.

The servants fall suddenly on their knees at the back of the chamber. The physician, approaching the bed and feeling the body, says they are right. There is a long silence, and then Golaud breaks out sobbing.

Arkël. Do not stay here, Golaud. . . . She must have silence now. . . . Come, come. . . . It is terrible, but it is not your fault. . . . 'Twas a little being, so quiet, so fearful, and so silent. . . . 'Twas a poor little mysterious being, like everybody. . . . She lies there as if she were the big sister of her child. . . . Come, come. . . . My God! My God! . . . I shall never understand it at all. . . . Let us not stay here.—Come; the child must not stay here in this room. . . . She must live now in her place. . . . It is the poor little one's turn. . . .

[*They go out in silence.*

THE WEAVERS*

By Gerhart Hauptmann

First played in Berlin in 1892.

Argument: The weavers of Silesia are represented as reduced to a deplorable condition by arduous toil and insufficient pay. They organize to obtain redress and wreak vengeance upon their employers. It seems doubtful whether they will be able to improve their situation.

Hauptmann drew his inspiration for this play from stories told by his grandfather, who, as a young fellow in the period of 1840, sat at his loom, a poor weaver like those here depicted. Although such conditions are not to be found in Europe to-day, the drama stands as a permanent warning against injustice.

A number of the weavers of Peterswaldau have come to the house of Dreissiger, the fustian manufacturer, to deliver their finished cloth. Most of them have the air of standing before the bar of justice in torturing expectation of a decision that means life or death to them. They are flat-chested, short-winded, sallow, poor-looking creatures of the loom, their knees bent with much sitting.

Times are very hard and some of the weavers beg for small advances on their work, but Pfeiffer, the manufacturer's manager, who has risen from the station of weaver himself, is very hard and turns a deaf ear to their entreaties. One of the weavers alone, Becker, a powerfully built young man, is bold enough to stand up for himself.

Pfeiffer has a keen eye for imperfections in the webs, and is so exacting in the matter of weight that Becker says the weavers would have to pay for extra yarn out of their own pockets to satisfy him. Pfeiffer declares that people

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who are industrious and understand their work, doing it in the fear of God, never need pay in advance.

Neumann, the cashier, sings in a tone that is meant to be droll, "Every year brings a child to the linen-weaver's wife, heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh." The apprentice takes up the rhyme, "And the little brat's blind the first weeks of its life, heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh."

Pfeiffer admonishes the weavers that if they want to live well they must weave well, adding that if they are not satisfied with what they get they need not come again, for there are plenty ready to tramp the soles off their shoes for it. Baumert, an old weaver, observes that if folks be poor one trouble comes to them on top of another; there's no help for it and there's no end to it.

Old Baumert. We haven't so much as a bite in the house and so I've had the little dog killed. There's not much on him, for the poor beast was half starved. A nice little dog he was! I couldn't kill him myself. I hadn't the heart to do it.

Becker growls that they get only a beggarly pittance for their work after plying the treadle from early morning till late at night and bending over their looms for days and days, tired to death every evening, sick with the dust and heat. This speech provokes the warning from Pfeiffer that no impudence is allowed there.

Becker. If you think I'll hold my tongue for your telling you're much mistaken.

Pfeiffer [*exclaims*]. We'll see about that! [*Rushes to the glass door and calls into the office.*] Mr. Dreissiger, Mr. Dreissiger, will you be good enough to come here?

Dreissiger comes in. He is about forty, full-bodied, asthmatic, and looks severe.

Dreissiger. What is it, Pfeiffer?

Pfeif. [*spitefully*]. Becker says he won't be told to hold his tongue.

Dreis. [*draws himself up, throws back his head, stares at* BECKER; *his nostrils tremble*]. Oh, indeed!—Becker. [*To* PFEIFFER.] Is he the man? . . . [*The clerks nod.*]

Beck. [*insolently*]. Yes, Mr. Dreissiger, yes! [*Pointing to himself.*] This is the man. [*Pointing to* DREISSIGER.] And that's a man, too!

Dreis. [*angrily*]. Fellow, how dare you?

Pfeif. He's too well off. He'll go dancing on the ice once too often, though.

Beck. [*recklessly*]. You shut up, you Jack-in-the-box. Your mother must have gone dancing once too often with Satan to have got such a devil for a son.

Dreis. [*now in a violent passion, roars*]. Hold your tongue this moment, sir, or . . . [*He trembles and takes a few steps forward.*]

Beck. [*holding his ground steadily*]. I'm not deaf. My hearing's quite good yet.

Dreis. [*controls himself, asks in an apparently cool business tone*]. Was this fellow not one of the pack . . .?

Pfeif. He's a Bielau weaver. When there's any mischief going, they are sure to be in it.

Dreis. [*trembling*]. Well, I give you all warning: if the same thing happens again as last night—a troop of half-drunken cubs marching past my windows singing that low song . . .

Beck. Is it "Bloody Justice" you mean?

Dreis. You know well enough what I mean. I tell you that if I hear it again I'll get hold of one of you, and—mind, I'm not joking—before the justice he shall go. And if I can find out who it was that made up that vile doggerel . . .

Becker states it as his opinion that a manufacturer has four stomachs like a cow, and teeth like a wolf. Thereupon Dreissiger directs his clerks to give him no more work. Becker says it is all the same to him whether he starves at his loom or by the roadside.

A weaver's boy who has tramped a long way with a heavy bundle of cloth faints from hunger and exhaustion. Dreissiger apparently fears that the incident may look bad for him and takes occasion to harangue the weavers, who are so spiritless that they agree to all that he claims. He makes them admit that a good workman is able to gain a living in his employment.

Although he is losing money, Dreissiger says, he keeps his weavers at work. He says he has thousands of pieces of cloth in stock, but is still willing to give employment to 200 more hands—on conditions that Pfeiffer will state. He withdraws. The new price is to be ten groschen a web, a great reduction from the price usual before. Dreissiger

is only taking advantage of the destitution in the community to increase his stock at a still cheaper rate.

Old Baumert's home is at Kashbach, and there his family, at work in a tiny room, are anxiously awaiting his return. Emma and Bertha, his daughters, are at their looms, and Mother Baumert, a decrepit old woman, sits on a stool beside the bed with a winding wheel in front of her. Her idiot son August sits on a footstool, also winding.

Little Fritz, a barefooted, ragged boy of four, comes in whimpering and says he is hungry. Emma tells him to wait a little and grandfather will come with bread. Mother Baumert suddenly begins to cry. She is afraid her husband has stopped at the tavern, and there isn't so much as a pinch of salt or a bit of wood in the house. Bertha, who is fifteen, says they will go out in the wood and get some sticks by moonlight and take the risk of being caught by the forester.

Mrs. Heinrich, a neighbor, comes in. She is with child and has an expression of anxiety and torturing apprehension. She has a piece of glass in her foot which Bertha undertakes to remove.

Mrs. Heinrich [*breaks out despairingly*]. Things is in a terrible way with us!

She struggles in vain against a rush of tears; then weeps silently.

Mother Baumert. The best thing as could happen to the likes of us, Jenny, would be if God had pity on us an' took us away out o' this weary world.

Mrs. H. [*no longer able to control herself, screams, still crying*]. My children's starvin'. [*Sobs and moans.*] I'm at my wits' ends. Let me work till I fall down—I'm more dead than alive—it's all no use. Am I able to fill nine hungry mouths? We got a bit o' bread last night, but it wasn't enough even for the two smallest ones. Who was I to give it to, eh? They all cried: Me, me, mother! give it to me! . . . An' if it's like this while I'm still on my feet, what'll it be when I've to take to bed? Our few taters was washed away. We haven't a thing to put in our mouths.

At last old Baumert returns, staggering under a heavy

bundle of yarn, and at the same time another visitor enters, Moritz Jaeger, a reserve soldier, who is clean and rosy-cheeked. He has heard that Emma has a boy, and now learns that the father had consumption and is already dead and forgotten.

Jaeger has money, having just been discharged, and he takes a bottle of brandy out of his pocket to cheer the family. He says he is dumbfounded to come back and see how the people live. Things can't go on like this, he says; the very dogs in the towns live better.

Ansorge, the householder, is in as bad a plight as his tenants. He was formerly a weaver but is now unable to work effectively at the loom. Bringing in a pan of soup that he wants to warm, he is quite overcome to find meat roasting in the oven and a bottle of brandy on the table. The bottle circulates freely.

Old B. If we could anyway have a bit of meat on Sundays and holidays, instead of never seeing the sight of it from year's end to year's end! Now we'll have to wait till another poor little dog finds its way into the house like this one did four weeks gone by—and that's not likely to happen soon again.

Mother B. A nice, kind little beast he was, too!

Ansorge asks Jaeger if things are likely to improve for the weavers, as far as he can see. He says they are in an awful state, not living and not dying; a man fights to the bitter end, but he's bound to be beaten at the last. Ansorge can scarcely earn a groschen a day at his basket weaving, although he keeps at it till late into the night.

Old B. Some one would need to go to Berlin an' tell the King how hard put to it we are.

Jaeger. Little good that would do, Father Baumert. There's been plenty written about it in the newspapers. But the rich people, they can turn and twist things round . . . as cunning as the devil himself.

Old B. [*shaking his head*]. To think they've no more sense than that in Berlin!

Ansorge. And is it really true, Moritz? Is there no law to help us? If a man hasn't been able to scrape together enough to pay his mortgage interest, though he's worked the very skin off his hands, must his house be taken from him? The peasant that's lent the money on it, he wants

his rights—what else can you look for from him? But what's to be the end of it all, I don't know.—If I'm put out o' the house . . . [*In a voice choked by tears.*] I was born here, and here my father sat at his loom for more than forty year. Many was the time he said to mother: Mother, when I'm gone, the house'll still be here. I've worked hard for it. Every nail means a night's weaving, every plank a year's dry bread. A man would think that . . .

Jaeger. They're quite fit to take the last bite out of your mouth—that's what they are.

Ans. Well, well, well! I would rather be carried out than have to walk out now in my old days. Who minds dyin'? My father, he was glad to die. At the very end he got frightened, but I crept into bed beside him, an' he quieted down again. I was a lad of thirteen then. I was tired and fell asleep beside him—I knew no better—and when I woke he was quite cold.

Ansorge's tears fall in his soup. Baumert has begun to eat meat out of the saucepan, unable to restrain himself. It is two years since he took the sacrament, he says, and he went straight after that and sold his Sunday coat and bought some pork. Since then not a mouthful of meat has passed his lips till to-night. He thinks Jaeger is the man the weavers need to stand up for them in the community and get them better times.

There is nothing that Jaeger would like better than to give the manufacturers a bit of a fright. He'd like to take Dreissiger with one hand and Dittrich with the other and knock their heads together. If the weavers would all join together, he says, and show they had some pluck they could make the manufacturers give them better wages.

Old Baumert has quietly gone out. Mother Baumert begins to cry. She says that now he has got meat he is not able to keep it down. The old man comes back crying with rage.

Jaeger [*with a sudden violent outburst of wrath*]. And yet there are people not far from here, justices they call themselves, too, overfed brutes, that have nothing to do all the year round but invent new ways of wasting their time. And these people say that the weavers would be quite well off if only they weren't so lazy.

Ans. The men as say that are no men at all, they're monsters.

Jaeger. Never mind, Father Ansorge; we're making the place hot for 'em. Becker and I have been and given Dreissiger a piece of our mind, and before we came away we sang him "Bloody Justice."

Jaeger reads the song. The lasts two stanzas run as follows:

Then think of all our woe and want,
  Oh, ye who hear this ditty!
Our struggle vain for daily bread
  Hard hearts would move to pity.

But pity's what *you've* never known—
  You'd take both skin and clothing
You cannibals, whose cruel deeds
  Fill all good men with loathing.

Old B. [*jumps up, beside himself with excitement*]. "Both skin and clothing." It's true, it's all true! Here I stand, Robert Baumert, master-weaver of Kashbach. Who can bring up anything against me? . . . I've been an honest, hard-working man all my life long, an' look at me now! What have I to show for it? Look at me! See what they've made of me! Stretched on the rack day after day. [*He holds out his arms.*] Feel that! Skin and bone! "You villains all, you brood of hell!!"

He sinks down on a chair, weeping with rage and despair.

Ans. [*flings his basket from him into a corner, rises, his whole body trembling with rage, gasps*]. And the time's come now for a change, I say. We'll stand it no longer! We'll stand it no longer! Come what may!

In the tavern at Peterswaldau a few days later the talk is all of the commotion the weavers are making. Old Baumert is there with a bundle of yarn, and Ansorge, too, who is going to try weaving again. Some of the weavers tell of their troubles. A commercial traveller says that an investigation has been made of conditions among the poor which proves the stories of suffering to have been exaggerated.

Hornig, the rag dealer, declares that the investigators went about in the better part of the village and then sent a report to Berlin that there was no distress at all. Weavers are heard outside singing, and then some of them come in, headed by Becker and Jaeger. It is old Baumert, much excited, who announces that the weavers are determined to put up with injustice no longer.

An old blacksmith, Wittig, scoffs at the idea of a rebellion among the weavers, and says that the baa-lambs will be at it next. Old Baumert replies that he doesn't claim it wouldn't be better to bring about a change peaceably, if it were only possible.

Wittig. Peaceably! How could it be done peaceably? Did they do it peaceably in France? Did Robespeer tickle the rich men's palms? No! It was away with them, every one! To the gilyoteen with them! Allongs onfong! You've got your work before you. The geese'll not fly ready roasted into your mouths.

Jaeger. Look here, Wittig. You've always jawed such a lot about the French revolution, and a good deal, too, about your own doings. A time may be coming, and that before long, when every one will have a chance to show whether he's a braggart or a true man.

Wit. [*flaring up*]. Say another word if you dare! Have you heard the whistle of bullets? Have you done outpost duty in an enemy's country?

Jaeger. You needn't get angry about it. We're comrades. I meant no harm.

Wit. None of your comradeship for me, you impudent young fool.

A policeman comes in to learn what is going on. Wittig joins the others in jeering at him.

Wit. A policeman like that has a hard life. Now it's a starving beggar boy he has to lock up, then it's a pretty weaver girl he has to lead astray; then he has to get roarin' drunk and beat his wife till she goes screamin' to the neighbors for help; and there's the ridin' about on horseback and the lyin' in bed till nine—faith, but it's no easy job!

The policeman promises him that the magistrates shall know all about his dangerous tongue. Wittig accuses the policeman of spreading stories about him and hurting his

trade, and at last makes a rush at him. The policeman escapes.

Jaeger leads in the singing of "Bloody Justice," and most of the weavers march out. Hornig and old Baumert are left singing the last stanza:

You villains all, you brood of hell,
You fiends in fashion human,
A curse will fall on all like you
Who prey on man and woman.

Welzel [*phlegmatically collecting the glasses*]. Their backs are up to-day, and no mistake.

Hornig [*to* OLD BAUMERT, *who is preparing to go*]. What in the name of Heaven are they up to, Baumert?

Old B. They're goin' to Dreissiger's to make him add something on to the pay.

Wel. And are you joining in these foolish ongoings?

Old. B. I've no choice, Welzel. The young men may an' the old men must. [*Goes out rather shamefacedly.*

Horn. It'll not surprise me if this ends badly.

Wel. To think that even old fellows like him are goin' right off their heads!

Horn. We all set our hearts on something!

Dreissiger meanwhile is entertaining Pastor Kittelhaus and his wife. Mrs. Dreissiger, Mr. and Mrs. Kittelhaus, and Weinhold, a theological graduate who is tutoring the Dreissiger children, are in the luxurious drawing-room. The pastor says there is something fine about the ideals of youth, but that unfortunately they don't last.

Kittelhaus. My dear Mr. Weinhold, however restless-minded and unsettled a man may be—[*in a tone of reproof*]—and you are a case in point—however violently and wantonly he may attack the existing order of things, he calms down in the end. I grant you, certainly, that among our professional brethren individuals are to be found who, at a fairly advanced age, still play youthful pranks. One preaches against the drink evil and founds temperance societies, another publishes appeals which undoubtedly read most effectively. But what good do they do? The distress among the weavers, where it does exist, is in no

way lessened—but the peace of society is undermined. No, no; one feels inclined in such cases to say: Cobbler, stick to your last; don't take to caring for the belly you who have the care of souls. Preach the pure Word of God, and leave all else to Him who provides shelter and food for the birds, and clothes the lilies of the field.—But I should like to know where our good host, Mr. Dreissiger, has suddenly disappeared to.

Dreissiger enters, hot and excited. He says that a vile rabble have come to the house and points them out through the window. He sees Becker in the crowd and declares he will have him arrested. Kittelhaus is highly incensed and asks if there is to be no end to this nuisance. When Weinhold pleads in extenuation of the weavers' misconduct, saying that they are hungry and ignorant, it brings down Dreissiger's wrath upon his head. Weinhold goes, and the ladies retire into another room as the superintendent of police is announced.

The superintendent quite approves when he learns that Dreissiger has directed some of his dyers to seize one of the ringleaders of the mob. Jaeger is led in by five dyers. Jaeger, stimulated by brandy, is feeling impudent and gay. He calls the dyers hounds, and says he would as soon have his hand rot off as to lay it on a mate.

Superintendent [*shouts to* JAEGER]. Off with your cap, sir. [JAEGER *takes it off, but very slowly, still with an impudent grin on his face.*] What's your name?

Jaeger. What's yours? I'm not your swineherd.

Great excitement is produced among the audience by this reply.

Dreis. This is too much of a good thing.

Supt. [*changes color, is on the point of breaking out furiously, but controls his rage*]. We'll see about this afterward.—Once more, what's your name? [*Receiving no answer, furiously.*] If you don't answer at once, fellow, I'll have you flogged on the spot.

Jaeger ignores him and addresses a serving maid, whom he advises to leave the house, as a wind may begin to blow that will sweep away everything overnight. The pastor supplies Jaeger's name. The mob are heard yelling wildly to Jaeger to come out. The superintendent orders a policeman to handcuff Jaeger and take him off with six

dyers as a guard. Jaeger shouts a taunt as he goes out.

Dreissiger affects to regard the trouble as settled, but betrays his nervousness as he and the pastor prepare to play whist. Kittelhaus is frankly much concerned at the uproar in the street, which is now suddenly redoubled. He cannot see what has come over the weavers, who used to be so patient and humble and so easily led. Dreissiger lays it to the societies for the alleviation of distress among the poor, which have at last convinced the weavers that distress exists.

Kittelhaus. So that with all their humanitarianism they have only succeeded in almost literally turning lambs into wolves.

Dreis. I don't say that, sir. When you take time to think of the matter coolly, it's possible that some good may come of it yet. Such occurrences as this will not pass unnoticed by those in authority, and may lead them to see that things can't be allowed to go on as they are doing—that means must be taken to prevent the utter ruin of our home industries.

The remedy, in Dreissiger's opinion, lies in imposing import duties to increase the prices of manufactured goods.

Pfeiffer staggers in, pale and breathless, almost crying with fear, and screams that the mob has set on the police and set Jaeger free. He thinks things look very serious. The next moment the coachman announces that he has harnessed horses to two carriages, and urges the family to escape by the back door while there is yet time. The pastor is determined he will go out and remonstrate with the crowd. He leaves the room with Dreissiger, Pfieffer, and the coachman.

Mrs. Dreissiger [*absently*]. I don't know how it is, Mrs. Kittelhaus, but I . . . I can't tell you how I feel. I didn't think such a thing was possible. It's . . . it's as if it was a sin to be rich. If I had been told about all this beforehand, Mrs. Kittelhaus, I don't know but what I would rather have been left in my own humble position.

Mrs. Kittelhaus. There are troubles and disappointments in every condition of life, Mrs. Dreissiger.

Mrs. D. True, true, I can well believe that. And sup-

pose we have more than other people . . . goodness me! we didn't steal it. It's been honestly got, every penny of it. It's not possible that the people can be going to attack us? If trade's bad, that's not William's fault, is it?

Loud, confused yelling is heard outside. While the two women stand gazing at each other, pale and startled, Dreissiger rushes in.

Dreissiger is at last reduced to panic. Bidding his wife to put on something and get into the carriage, he quickly brings out a strong box and transfers things of value from it to his pockets. The coachman returns abruptly and again urges the family to make haste before they are cut off. Mrs. Kittelhaus thinks that something dreadful has happened to her husband that they are keeping from her.

Dreis. You mustn't take it to heart—they'll be sorry for it yet. I know exactly whose fault it was. Such a detestable, shameful outrage will not go unpunished. A community laying hands on its own pastor and maltreating him—abominable! Mad dogs they are—raging brutes—and they'll be treated as such. [*To his wife who still stands petrified.*] Go, for my sake, Rosa, go quickly! [*The clatter of window panes being smashed on the ground floor is heard.*] They've gone quite mad. There's nothing for it but to get away as fast as we can.

[*Cries of "Pfeiffer, come out!"—"We want Pfeiffer!"—"Pfeiffer, come out!" are heard.*]

Mrs. D. Pfeiffer, Pfeiffer, they want Pfeiffer!

Pfeif. [*dashes in*]. Mr. Dreissiger, there are people at the back gate already, and the house door won't hold much longer. The smith's battering it in with a stable pail.

The cry sounds louder and clearer: "Pfeiffer! Pfeiffer! Pfeiffer! come out!" Mrs. Dreissiger rushes off as if pursued. Mrs. Kittelhaus follows. Pfeiffer listens, and changes color as he hears what the cry is. A perfect panic of fear seizes him; he weeps, entreats, whimpers, writhes, all at the same moment. He overwhelms Dreissiger with childish caresses, strokes his cheeks and arms, kisses his hands, and at last, like a drowning man, throws his arms round him and prevents him moving.

Pfeif. Dear, good, kind Mr. Dreissiger, don't leave me

behind. I've always served you faithfully. I've always treated the people well. I couldn't give them more wages than the fixed rate. Don't leave me here—they'll do for me! If they find me, they'll kill me. O God! O God! My wife, my children!

Dreis. [*making his way out, vainly endeavoring to free himself from* PFEIFFER's *clutch*]. Can't you let me go, fellow? It'll be all right; it'll be all right.

For a few seconds the room is empty. Windows are broken in the drawing-room. A loud crash resounds through the house, followed by shouts of "Hurrah!" For an instant there is silence. Then gentle, cautious steps are heard on the stair, then timid, hushed ejaculations: "To the left!"—"Up with you!"—"Hush!"—"Slow, slow!"—"Don't shove like that!"—"It's a wedding we're goin' to!"—"Stop that crowding!"—"You go first!"—"No, you go!"

Young weavers and weaver girls appear at the door leading from the hall, not daring to enter, but each trying to shove the other in. In the course of a few minutes their timidity is overcome, and the poor, thin, ragged, or patched figures, many of them sickly looking, disperse themselves through Dreissiger's room and the drawing-room, first gazing timidly and curiously at everything, then beginning to touch things. Girls sit down on the sofas, whole groups admire themselves in the mirrors, men stand upon chairs, examine the pictures and take them down. There is a steady influx of miserable-looking creatures from the hall.

One old weaver thinks things are going too far. They are starting to smash furniture downstairs. He fears there will be a bad end to it.

Becker, Jaeger, Wittig, and a number of other weavers rush in as if looking for some one, shouting hoarsely. Becker asks where the cruel brute is. Old Baumert says if they can eat grass, he can eat sawdust. Wittig swears they will hang him if they catch him.

First Young Weaver. We'll take him by the legs and fling him out at the window, on to the stones. He'll never get up again.

Second Young Weaver [*enters*]. He's off!

All. Who?

Second Young Weaver. Dreissiger.

Beck. Pfeiffer, too?

Voices. Let's get hold of Pfeiffer! Look for Pfeiffer!

Baumert. Yes, yes! Pfeiffer! Tell him there's a weaver here for him to starve.

[*Laughter.*]

Jaeger. If we can't lay hands on that brute Dreissiger himself . . . we'll at any rate make a poor man of him.

Baumert. As poor as a church mouse . . . we'll see to that!

All, bent on the work of destruction, rush toward the drawing-room door.

Beck. [*who is leading, turns round and stops the others*]. Halt! Listen to me! This is nothing but a beginning. When we're done here, we'll go straight to Bielau, to Dittrich's, where the steam power-looms are. The whole mischief's done by these factories.

Old Ansorge [*enters from the hall, takes a few steps and then stops and looks around bewildered; shakes his head and taps his forehead*]. Who am I? Weaver Anton Ansorge. Has he gone mad, old Ansorge? My head's goin' round like a hummin' top, sure enough. What's he doin' here? He'll do whatever he's a mind to. Where is Ansorge? [*He taps his forehead repeatedly.*] Something's wrong. I'm not answerable! I'm off my head! Off with you, off with you, rioters that you are! Heads off, legs off, hands off! If you take my house, I take your house. Forward! Forward!

He goes yelling into the drawing-room, followed by a yelling, laughing mob.

The storm spreads to other towns. At Langen-Bielau news of the revolt is brought to the house of Weaver Hilse while the family are at worship. Weaver Hilse is a bearded man of strong build, but bent and wasted with age, toil, sickness, and hardship He is an old soldier and has lost an arm. He is standing, as are also his son, Gottlieb, and his daughter-in law, Luise. His wife, who has gone blind from weaving, remains seated. Old Hilse utters a long and devout prayer.

The younger woman is rebellious at the patience of old Hilse. She is greatly embittered, and finds no comfort in

his faith. It is Hornig, the rag dealer, who brings the first word of the outbreak at Peterswaldau. He says the weavers have completely wrecked Dreissiger's house and dye works and thrown his stock of goods into the river. It was a solemn and a woful sight, he says, to see the poor starving creatures taking their revenge for once.

Distant bells are heard. The weavers, now fifteen hundred strong, are said to be wreaking their vengeance at the village of Reichenbach. In a short time they will be at Langen-Bielau. Old Hilse is filled with indignation at their conduct, and cautions his son to have nothing to do with them. This is too much for Luise.

Luise [has lost all control of herself]. You an' your piety an' religion—did they serve to keep the life in my poor children? In rags an' dirt they lay, all the four—it didn't as much as keep them dry. Yes! I set up to be a mother, that's what I do—an' if you'd like to know it, that's why I would send all the manufacturers to hell—because I'm a mother!—Not one of the four could I keep in life! It was cryin' more than breathin' with me from the time each poor little thing came into the world till death took pity on it. The devil a bit you cared! You sat there prayin' and singin', and let me run about till my feet bled, tryin' to get one little drop o' skim milk. How many hundred nights have I lain an' racked my head to think what I could do to cheat the churchyard of my little one! What harm has a baby like that done that it must come to such a miserable end—eh? An' over there at Dittrich's they're bathed in wine an' washed in milk. No! you may talk as you like, but if they begin here, ten horses won't hold me back. An' what's more—if there's a rush on Dittrich's, you'll see me in the front of it—an' pity the man as tries to prevent me—I've stood it long enough, so now you know it.

She calls the men whey-faced gutter scrapers, and says they haven't enough blood left in them to turn red in the face. Old Hilse, who has "spilled his blood by the quart for king and country," says he has strength enough yet to make a stand against a few rubbishing bayonets, and that he would be glad enough to leave behind the bundle of aches and pains called the body, and the care and oppression called by the name of life. But there's something to

come after and they mustn't do themselves out of that.

Gottlieb. Who knows what's to come after? Nobody's seen it.

Old Hilse. Gottlieb! don't you be throwin' doubts on the one comfort us poor people have. Why have I sat here an' worked my treadle like a slave this forty year an' more?—sat still an' looked on at him over yonder livin' in pride an' wastefulness—why? Because I have a better hope, something as supports me in all my troubles. [*Points out at the window.*] You have your good things in this world—I'll have mine in the next. That's been my thought. An' I'm that certain of it—I'd let myself be torn in pieces. Have we not His promise? There's a Day of Judgment coming; but it's not us as are the judges —no: vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

A cry of "Weavers, come out!" is heard outside the window. Old Hilse and his son seat themselves resolutely at their looms. Presently a strange sound is heard at a little distance, coming nearer, a sort of dull, monotonous wail. It is the weavers' song sung by hundreds of voices.

Gottlieb's wife and some of the neighbors stand at the window of an adjoining room and call out that the weavers are attacking Dittrich's house. Hornig says the weavers are going to smash up the power looms next, for it is they that ruin the hand loom weaver. Some of the mob come to bring out the Hilses. When they see the old man at his loom they cool down a little. But Becker tells old Hilse to leave his work and he will be well taken care of.

Old Baumert enters the discussion, which soon is diverted to the subject of what they shall do next. Jaeger suggests giving a lesson to all who hold government positions. Before long, they say, they will go to Breslau, and more and more will be joining them all the time. Some of them offer Hilse bottles of brandy and wine, which he never touches. "Christmas comes but once a year," says one, and there is general laughter.

Old H. [*impatiently*]. What is it you want in my house, you limbs of Satan?

Old B. [*a little intimidated, coaxingly*]. I was bringin' you a chicken, Gustav. I thought it would make a drop o' soup for mother.

Old H. [*embarrassed, almost friendly*]. Well, you can tell mother yourself.

Mother Hilse [*who has been making efforts to hear, her hand at her ear, motions them off*]. Let me alone. I don't want no chicken soup.

Old H. That's right, mother. An' I want none, an' least of all that sort. An' let me say this much to you, Baumert: The devil stands on his head for joy when he hears the old ones jabberin' and talkin' as if they was infants. An' to you all I say—to every one of you: Me and you, we've got nothing to do with each other. It's not with my will that you're here. In law an' justice you've no right to be in my house.

Some of them threaten the old man, but he is steadfast. The change they are proclaiming will come, he says, on the Judgment Day. The soldiers will soon be down on the weavers, and for every two they beat off ten will come back. Just then there is a cry outside that the soldiers are coming. Silence falls on the little gathering. A faint sound of fifes and drums is heard. In a twinkling the room is emptied. After continuing the dispute with the family for a few minutes, Luise rushes out and joins the rioters.

Old. B. [*he has been cowering on a low stool, painfully beating his brains, and now gets up*]. It's true, Gustav, as I've had a drop too much. But for all that I know what I'm about. You think one way in this here matter; I think another. I say Becker's right; even if it ends in chains an' ropes—we'll be better off in prison than at home. You're cared for there, an' you don't need to starve. I wouldn't have joined them, Gustav, if I could have let it be; but once in a lifetime a man's got to show what he feels. [*Goes slowly toward the door.*] Good-bye, Gustav. If anything happens, mind you put in a word for me in your prayers. [*Goes out.*

Old Hilse knots at his web. Gottlieb has taken an axe from behind the stove and is absently feeling its edge. He and the old man are silently agitated. The hum and roar of a great crowd penetrate the room. Old Hilse notices his son and tells him to put down the axe. Just then some one going by the window looks in and jeers at Gottlieb.

Gottlieb [*jumps up and shakes his fist at the window*]. Brute that you are, would you drive me crazy?

A volley of musketry is heard.

Mother H. [*starts and trembles*]. Good Lord! Is that thunder again?

Old H. [*instinctively folds his hands*]. Oh, our Father in heaven! Defend the poor weavers, protect my poor brothers! [*A short pause ensues. Then he speaks to himself, painfully agitated.*] There's blood flowing now.

Gottlieb sprang up and seized the axe when the firing was heard. Deathly pale and beside himself, he asks if he is still to lie to heel like a dog.

A Girl [*calls from the entry-room*]. Father Hilse, Father Hilse! get away from the window. A bullet's just flown in at ours, upstairs. [*Disappears.*

Mielchen [*puts her head in at the window, laughing*]. Gran'father, gran'father, they've shot with their guns. Two or three's been knocked down, an' one of them's turnin' round and round like a top, an' one's twistin' himself like a sparrow when its head's bein' pulled of. An' oh, if you saw all the blood that came pourin'——! [*Disappears.*

A Weaver's Wife. Yes, there's two or three'll never get up again.

An Old Weaver [*in the entry-room*]. Look out! They're goin' to make a rush on the soldiers.

A Second Weaver [*wildly*]. Look, look, look at the women, skirts up', an' spittin' in the soldiers' faces already!

A Weaver's Wife [*calls in*]. Gottlieb, look at your wife. She's more pluck in her than you. She's jumpin' about in front o' the bay'nets as if she was dancin' to music.

Four men carry a wounded rioter through the entry-room. Silence, which is broken by some one saying in a distinct voice, "It's Weaver Ulbrich." Once more silence for a few seconds, when the same voice is heard again: "It's all over with him; he's got a bullet in his ear." The men are heard climbing the wooden stairs. Sudden shouting outside: "Hurrah! hurrah!"

Voices in the Entry-room. "Where did they get the stones from?"—"Yes, it's time you were off!"—"From the new road."—"Ta-ta, soldiers!"—"It's raining paving-stones."

Shrieks of terror and loud roaring outside, taken up by

those in the entry-room. There is a cry of fear, and the house door is shut with a bang.

Voices in the Entry-room. "They're loading again."—"They'll fire another volley this minute."—"Father Hilse, get away from that window."

Gott. [*clutches the axe*]. What! are we mad dogs? Are we to eat powder an' shot now instead of bread? [*Hesitating an instant: to the old man.*] Would you have me sit here an' see my wife shot? Never! [*As he rushes out.*] Look out! I'm coming!

Old H. Gottlieb, Gottlieb!

Mother H. Where's Gottlieb gone?

Old H. He's gone to the devil.

Voices from the Entry-room. Go away from the window, Father Hilse.

Old H. Not I! Not if you all go crazy together! [*To* MOTHER HILSE, *with rapt excitement.*] My heavenly Father has placed me here. Isn't that so, mother? Here we'll sit, an' do our bounden duty—ay, though the snow was to go on fire. [*He begins to weave.*]

Rattle of another volley. Old Hilse, mortally wounded, starts to his feet and then falls forward over the loom. At the same moment loud shouting of "Hurrah!" is heard. The people who till now have been standing in the entry-room dash out, joining in the cry. The old woman repeatedly asks: "Father, father what's wrong with you?" The continued shouting dies away gradually in the distance. Mielchen comes rushing in.

Mielchen. Gran'father, gran'father, they're drivin' the soldiers out of the village; they've got into Dittrich's house, an' they're doin' what they did at Dreissiger's. Gran'father! [*The child grows frightened, notices that something has happened, puts her finger in her mouth, and goes up cautiously to the dead man.*] Gran'father!

Mother H. Come now, father, can't you say something? You're frightenin' me.

THE SEAGULL*

By Anton Tchekhof

First played in Petrograd at the Alexandrynsky Theatre in 1896.

A rough stage has been knocked together for amateur theatricals in the park of Peter Sorin's estate. It consists of a platform and wings, with no other scenery than that furnished by nature. When the curtain is raised a lake is revealed in the background. A play written by Sorin's nephew, Constantine Treplef, is to begin at half-past eight, when the moon rises.

Treplef. If Nina is late, of course the whole effect will be spoilt. It's time she arrived. Her father and step-mother are always watching her, and it's as hard for her to escape from the house as it is for a prisoner to escape from jail. [*Puts his uncle's tie straight.*] Your hair and beard are all rumpled. You ought to have them cut, don't you think?

Sorin [*smoothing out his beard*]. It's the tragedy of my life. Even when I was young I always looked as if I had taken to drink and all the rest of it. Women never loved me. [*Sitting.*] Why is your mother in such low spirits?

Trep. Oh, she's bored. [*Sitting by him.*] She's jealous. She's already hostile to me and to the whole performance, because it's Nina Zarétchnaya acting and not she. She hates my play, even before she's seen it.

Sorin [*laughing*]. Well, I never! Well, I never!

Trep. She is vexed at the idea of Nina Zarétchnaya and not herself having a success even in this poor little theatre. [*Looking at his watch.*] She is a psychological curiosity, is my mother. A clever and gifted woman, who can cry over a novel, will reel you off all Nekrasof's poems by heart, and is the perfection of a sick nurse; but venture to praise

*Published by Mitchell Kenerley, New York.

Eleonora Duse before her! Oho! ho! You must praise nobody but her, write about her, shout about her, and go into ecstasies over her wonderful performance in *La Dame aux Camélias*, or *The Fumes of Life;* but as she cannot have these intoxicating pleasures down here in the country, she's bored and gets spiteful; we are her enemies, she thinks; it's all our fault. Then, she's superstitious, is afraid of the number thirteen, or three candles on a table. She's a miser, too. She has seven thousand pounds in the bank at Odessa; I know it for certain. But ask her to lend you anything and she'll cry.

He pulls the petals from a flower saying, "She loves me, she loves me not." According to this test she does not love him. Why should she? he asks. She wants to live, to love, to wear pretty frocks; and he is twenty-five years old, and a perpetual reminder that she is no longer young. He declares that he loves her dearly, but exclaims that she leads a tomfool life with this novelist, Trigórin, always at her elbow, and her name forever in the papers.

Sorin inquires about the novelist. Treplef says he is intelligent, simple, inclined to melancholy, quite a good chap, famous already, before he is forty, and sated with everything. As for his writings, charming, talented, but you would not want to read Trigórin after Tolstoy or Zola. He hears some one coming. It is Nina. Even the sound of her footsteps is charming to him. Saying that he cannot live without her, and that he is insanely happy, he goes to meet her.

Trep. My lovely one, my dream . . .

Nina [*agitated*]. I'm not late . . . I'm sure I'm not late . . .

Trep. [*kissing her hands*]. No, no, no . . .

Nina. I've been so anxious all day; I was so frightened. I was afraid father would not let me come. . . . But at last he's gone out, just now, with my stepmother. There's a red glow in the sky, the moon is beginning to rise, and I whipped up the horses as fast as I could. [*Laughing.*] But I am happy now. [*Squeezing* SORIN'S *hand heartily.*]

Sor. [*laughing*]. You've been crying, I can see. . . . Hey, hey! You naughty girl!

Nina. It's quite true. You see how out of breath I am. I've got to go in half an hour; we must hurry. I

must; I must. Don't detain me for Heaven's sake. Father doesn't know I'm here.

Sorin leaves them.

Nina. My father and his wife won't let me come here. They say you are all Bohemians. . . . They are afraid of my becoming an actress. But I am drawn toward the lake like a seagull. My heart is full of you. [*Looks round.*]

Trep. We are alone.

Nina. Isn't there some one over there?

Trep. No, there's no one. [*Kissing her.*]

Nina. What sort of tree is that?

Trep. It's an elm.

Nina. Why is it so dark?

Trep. It's evening already; everything looks darker. Don't go away early, I entreat you.

Nina. I must.

Trep. Shall I drive over to-night, Nina? I will stand all night in the garden and look up at your window.

It is time for the performance to begin. Nina is nervous, not at appearing before Madame Arcádina, Constantine's mother, but because Trigórin will be there, and he writes such wonderful stories. She thinks Constantine's play very hard to act because there are no live people in it. He sees no reason why there should be. He does not consider it a writer's business to represent life as it is, or as he thinks it ought to be, but as it appears in reveries. It seems to her that a love interest is essential in a play.

They go behind the scenes, and Pauline, wife of the manager of the estate, comes forward with Dr. Dorn. She is nagging the doctor about taking care of himself, and wants him to go and put on his goloshes because it is getting damp. He, fond of his melodious voice, sings irrelevantly, "Say not that I have spoilt your youth." Another complaint that she makes is that women have always fallen in love with Dorn and thrown themselves at his head.

Madame Arcádina appears arm in arm with Sorin, who is her brother, and Trigórin, Shamrayef, the manager of the estate; Medvédenko, a schoolmaster, and Masha, Pauline's daughter. Masha is a melancholy girl and has

a weakness for snuff and vodka, but not for the schoolmaster, though he loves her devotedly.

The curtain rises, opening a view of the lake. The moon is just above the horizon, reflected in the water. Nina is discovered sitting on a rock.

Nina. Men and lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer, you, the father of Eternal Matter, the Devil, effects in you, as in stones and water, a perpetual mutation of atoms; you change unceasingly. In all the universe spirit alone remains constant and unchanging.

Treplef is aggrieved at overhearing his mother observe ironically that the play is going to be something decadent.

Nina pursues her long speech. One thing only is revealed to her, that in the cruel and stubborn struggle with the Devil, the principle of material forces, it is fated that she shall be victorious, and that then, after a long series of centuries, spirit and matter are to merge together in exquisite harmony and the reign of Universal Will is to begin. Against the background of the lake appear two red spots, representing the awful blood-red eyes of Nina's mighty antagonist.

Arc. [*laughing*]. I see, a scenic effect.

Trep. Mother!

Nina. He is lonely without man.

Pauline [*to* DORN]. Why, you've taken your hat off. Put it on again, or you'll catch cold.

Arc. The doctor's taking off his hat to the Devil, the father of Eternal Matter.

Trep. [*angry, in a loud voice*]. The play is over! That's enough! Curtain!

Treplef stops the performance and takes himself off. His mother says he is a peevish, conceited boy. She does not care to have him teach them what ought to be written and what ought to be acted. If he wanted to please them he should have chosen some ordinary sort of play instead of making them listen to decadent nonsense. She praises Nina's talent, however, telling her she ought to go on the stage, and introduces her to Trigórin.

It is already time for Nina to go. They urge her to stay a little longer. She hesitates, but says that she cannot, and begins to cry as she shakes hands hastily. Madame Arcádina explains that she is really an unfortunate

girl. Her mother left all her large fortune to her husband, and he has made a will bequeathing everything to his second wife.

Dorn liked the play and urges Treplef to go on writing, assuring him he is a man of talent. It is quite right in his opinion to choose a subject from the realm of abstract ideas; every artistic production ought to express a great thought. And then there is another thing to bear in mind: the idea must be clear and well-defined; otherwise you will go astray on your picturesque path.

Masha comes down from the house to find Treplef, but he is on the point of starting after Nina and tells her not to follow him about. Dorn reproves him for speaking harshly. Masha solaces herself with a pinch of snuff, and Dorn takes the snuff-box away from her and throws it into the bushes.

Masha. I want to say something to you again. I want to talk. [*Agitated.*] I don't care for my father, but my heart goes out to you. I somehow feel, with all my soul, that you are near to me. . . . Come, help me. Help me, or I shall commit some folly, I shall make havoc of my life . . . I can't hold out any longer.

Dorn. What is it? How am I to help you?

Masha. I am in pain. No one knows my sufferings. [*Laying her head on his breast softly.*] I am in love with Constantine.

Dorn. What bundles of nerves they all are! And what a lot of love. . . . Oh, magic lake! Oh, magic lake! [*Tenderly.*] What can I do, my child? What can I do?

From the croquet lawn the house is seen at a distance on high ground. The lake is visible at one side. There are flower beds about. It is midday and hot. Madame Arcádina, Dorn, and Masha are sitting on a bench under the shade of an old lime tree. Dorn is reading from a book:

"Truly, it is just as dangerous for people of fashion to beguile novelists to their houses as it would be for a grain dealer to raise rats in his storeroom. And yet they are much sought after. When a woman has chosen the writer she wishes to take captive, she lays siege to him by means of flattery and delicate attentions . . ."

Madame Arcádina says that may be true in France, but that there is nothing of the sort in Russia; they have no programme. As a rule, before a Russian woman takes her writer captive, she is head over ears in love with him. She and Trigórin are an example.

Sorin approaches with Nina, whose parents have gone away for three days. Sorin affects invalidism a good deal, and is now leaning on a stick and has Medvédenko following him with a wheel-chair. Nina is ecstatically happy. She thinks it a little odd that Trigórin should spend so much time fishing.

Madame Arcádina asks what is the matter with her son. It is Masha who answers that he is troubled at heart. She begs Nina to recite something from his play, but Nina thinks it too dull. Masha says that when *he* reads anything aloud, his eyes glow and his face turns pale; he has a beautiful melancholy voice and manners like a poet. She gets up, saying that her leg is asleep, and walks away lazily. Dorn remarks that she is going to get down a couple of glasses of vodka before lunch.

Sor. The poor thing gets no enjoyment out of life.

Dorn. Rot, your Excellency.

Sor. You talk like a man who has had his fill.

Arc. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What can be more tedious than this truly rural country tedium! So hot! So quiet! No one does anything, every one philosophizes. You're pleasant company, my friends, and it's very nice to hear you talk, but . . . oh, to be sitting in one's hotel, studying one's part! How very much nicer!

Nina [*enthusiastically*]. Oh, indeed! How well I can understand you!

Shamrayef comes to say that all the horses are being used and that Madame Arcádina cannot have any to drive into town. He is followed by his wife, who is presently left alone with Dorn.

Pauline [*entreating*]. Eugene, my dearest, my darling, let me leave him and come to you. Time is flying over us, we are no longer young; let us have done with concealment and falsehood before our days are ended. [*A pause.*]

Dorn. I am fifty-five. It is too late to change my way of life.

Paul. I know why you refuse. It is because there

are other women besides myself who are dear to you. You cannot let them all come to you. I understand. Forgive me; you are tired of me.

[NINA *appears near the house, picking flowers.*]

Dorn. No, no, I'm not tired of you.

Pauline. I suffer agonies of jealousy. Of course you are a doctor; you cannot avoid women. I understand.

Nina comes down to them. She reports that Madame Arcádina is crying, and that Sorin has asthma. Dorn says he must go and give them some Valerian drops. Nina gives him her flowers and he goes toward the house. Pauline follows him, and when he gets near the house she takes the flowers and tears them to pieces.

To Nina it seems wonderful that a famous writer, the darling of the public, mentioned daily in the papers, with his photograph in the shop windows, his books translated into foreign languages, should spend his whole day fishing and be delighted because he has caught two chub.*

Treplef comes up from the direction of the lake, hatless, with a gun and a dead seagull. He lays the bird at Nina's feet.

Trep. I have been brute enough to shoot this seagull. I lay it at your feet.

Nina. What is the matter with you? [*She takes up the gull and looks at it.*]

Trep. [*after a pause*]. I shall soon kill myself in the same way.

Nina. You are not yourself.

Trep. No, not since you ceased to be yourself. You have changed toward me; you look coldly at me; you are not at ease when I am by.

Nina. You have grown nervous and irritable of late; you express yourself incomprehensibly in what seems to be symbols. This seagull seems to be another symbol; but, I am afraid I don't understand. [*Laying it on the seat.*] I am too simple to understand you.

Trep. It began the night of the idiotic fiasco of my play. Women cannot forgive failure. I have burnt everything, everything to the last scrap. If only you

*Fishing with a float and looking for mushrooms were Tchekhof's own favorite occupations when he was in the country.

knew how unhappy I am! Your sudden indifference to me is terrible, incredible, as if I woke one morning and behold, this lake had dried up or run away into the earth. You said just now that you are too simple to understand me. Oh, what is there to understand? My play was a failure; you despise my inspiration; you look on me as commonplace and worthless, like hundreds of others. . . . [*Stamping.*] How well I can understand it! How well I can understand it! I feel as if there were a nail being driven into my brain. The devil take it. The devil take my vanity, too, which sucks out my blood, sucks it out like a snake. [*Seeing* TRIGÓRIN, *who reads a notebook as he walks.*] There goes the man of real talent; he walks like Hamlet; with a book, too. [*Mocking.*] "Words, words, words!" This sun has not yet risen on you, yet you smile already, your looks are melted in his rays. I will not stand in your way. [*Exit quickly.*

Trigórin [*writing in his book*]. Takes snuff and drinks vodka. . . . Always dressed in black. Schoolmaster is in love with her.

He answers Nina's greeting,* and says that it appears that owing to some unexpected turn of events they are leaving that day. He and she are hardly likely to meet again. He is sorry. He does not often come across young women, young interesting women; he has already forgotten how one feels at eighteen or nineteen and cannot imagine it very clearly; so that the young women in his stories and novels are usually untrue to life. He would like to be in her place, if only for an hour, so as to know what she thinks and what manner of creature she is.

She would like to be in his place so as to know what it feels like to be a gifted and famous writer. Either she exaggerates his fame, he says, or fame produces no sensation. But she persists that he is blessed with a brilliant, interesting life, all full of meaning. He is happy.

Nina. What a delightful life is yours!

Trig. What is there so very fine about it? [*Looking at his watch.*] I must be off to my writing in a moment.

*The actor who plays Trigórin has been advised to imitate Tchekhof himself as his friends describe him: a sad, thoughtful face, a soft, intimate way of talking, a childlike shyness; shrinking from praise, gentle in all his movements; then, when the moment comes, a sort of exaltation.

You must excuse me; I can't stop. [*Laughs.*] You have trodden on my favorite corn, as they say, and you see, I begin to get excited and angry at once. However, let us talk. We'll talk about my delightful, brilliant life. . . . Come on; where shall we begin? [*Meditating.*] You have heard of obsessions, when a man is haunted day and night, say, by the idea of the moon or something? Well, I've got my moon. Day and night I am obsessed by the same persistent thought; I must write, I must write, I must write. . . . No sooner have I finished one story than I am somehow compelled to write another, then a third, after the third a fourth. I write without stopping, except to change horses like a postchaise. I have no choice. What is there brilliant or delightful in that, I should like to know? It's a dog's life! Here I am talking to you, excited and delighted, yet never for one moment do I forget that there is an unfinished story waiting for me indoors. . . . When I finish a piece of work, I fly to the theatre or go fishing, in the hope of resting, of forgetting myself, but no, a new subject is already turning, like a heavy iron ball, in my brain, some invisible force drags me to my table and I must make haste to write and write. And so on for ever and ever. I have no rest from myself; I feel that I am devouring my own life, that for the honey which I give to unknown mouths out in the void I rob my choicest flowers of their pollen, pluck the flowers themselves and trample on their roots. Surely I must be mad? Surely my friends and acquaintances do not treat me as they would treat a sane man?

He often feels that his friends' interest, their praise, and admiration are all deception. Sometimes he is afraid that at any moment they may steal on him from behind and carry him off to a madhouse. In the old best days, when he was a beginner, his work was a continual torture. An unimportant writer, especially when things are going against him, feels clumsy, awkward, and superfluous. He is like a passionate gambler with no money to play with. The reader that he never saw presented himself to his imagination as something unfriendly and mistrustful. He was afraid of the public; it terrified him.

Nina. You must excuse me; I *refuse* to understand you. You are simply spoilt by success.

Trig. By what success? I've never satisfied *myself.* I do not care for myself as a writer. The worst of it is that I live in a kind of bewilderment and often do not understand what I write. I love water like this, trees, sky; I have the feeling for nature; it wakes a passion in me, an irresistible desire to write. But I am something more than a landscape-painter; I am a citizen as well; I love my country, I love the people; I feel that if I am a writer I am bound to speak of the people, of its sufferings, of its future, to speak of science, of the rights of man, etcetera, etcetera; and I speak about it all volubly, and am attacked angrily in return by every one; I dart from side to side like a fox run down by the hounds; I see that life and science fly farther and farther ahead of me, and I fall farther and farther behind, like the countryman running after the train; and in the end I feel that the only thing I can write of is the landscape, and in everything else I am untrue to life, false to the very marrow of my bones.

Nina. You work too hard; you have no time or wish to realize your own importance. You may be dissatisfied with yourself, but in the eyes of others you are great and wonderful. If I were a writer like you I would sacrifice my whole life to the million, but I would realize that its only happiness was to raise itself up to me; they should pull my chariot along.

Trig. Chariot indeed! . . . Am I an Agamemnon then, eh? [*They both smile.*]

Nina. For such happiness as to be a writer or an actress I would endure the hatred of my nearest and dearest. I would endure poverty and disillusionment. I would lodge in a garret and live on black bread. I would suffer dissatisfaction with myself, the consciousness of my own imperfections, but in return I would demand glory . . . real, ringing glory. [*Covering her face with her hands.*] My head swims. Ouf!

He hears Madame Arcádina calling him from the house. He supposes that he must pack. But he does not want to go away. He notices the seagull. Then he asks her to persuade Madame Arcádina to stay, and begins to write in his notebook. She asks him what he is writing. He replies that it is a subject for a short story that has just occurred to him. A girl—like herself, say—lives from her

childhood on the shores of a lake. She loves the lake like a seagull, and is happy and free like a seagull. But a man comes along by chance and sees her and ruins her, like this seagull, just to amuse himself.

Madame Arcádina appears at a window and calls again. As Trigórin goes toward the house, looking back at Nina, Madame Arcádina shouts that they are staying on. He enters the house. Nina stands in meditation, and exclaims at last, "It seems like a dream!"

Trunks and handbaggage set down in the dining-room indicate that Madame Arcádina and Trigórin are about to depart. Trigórin, indeed, is having lunch, and Masha is standing by the table. The fact that he is a novelist has emboldened her to lay bear her heart, and she says that he may use her story. If Constantine had wounded himself seriously, she assures him, she should not have consented to live another minute. She has determined to tear this love out of her heart by marrying Medvédenko.

The necessity for this course is not apparent to him, but what she cannot bear is to love without hope, for years and years to be waiting and waiting. Once she is married, she thinks, there will be no question of love; new cares will drown all traces of the old life. She refills their glasses, saying that women drink more than he thinks, some of them openly as she does, most of them secretly. She leaves him, and Nina enters.

Nina [*holding out her clenched hand toward* TRIGÓRIN]. Odd or even?

Trig. Even.

Nina [*sighing.*] "No." I have only one pea in my hand. The question was, whether I was to become an actress or not. If only some one would advise me!

Trig. It's a question one can't advise on. [*A pause.*]

Nina. We are parting to-day and very likely we shall never meet again. Please accept this little medallion as a keepsake. I have had your initials engraved on it . . . and on the other side the name of your book, "Days and Nights."

Trig. How graceful! [*Kissing the medallion.*] What a charming present!

Nina. Think of me sometimes.

Trig. I will indeed. I will think of you as you were that sunny day, do you remember? a week ago, when you wore a cotton frock . . . and we talked . . . and there was a seagull lying on the seat.

Nina [*meditatively*]. A seagull, yes. [*A pause.*] We can't talk any more; there's somebody coming. . . . Give me two minutes before you go, I entreat you. . . .

[*Exit.*

Madame Arcádina comes in with Sorin, whom she is advising to remain in the country to take care of his rheumatism. Trigórin reads the inscription on the medallion to himself: "*Days and Nights*, page 121, lines 11 and 12." He goes to find a copy of the book.

Madame Arcádina remarks that she is going away without having found out why Constantine tried to shoot himself. She expects the chief reason was jealousy, and the sooner she takes Trigórin away the better. Sorin thinks there were other reasons, too. A clever young man with no money and no position, he was ashamed of his indolence and felt like a parasite. It was very natural. The best thing, Sorin believes, would be for her to let Constantine have a little money. In the first place, he ought to be dressed like a human being. He has been wearing the same jacket for three years and has no overcoat. Then he ought to go abroad and see a bit of life.

At first thought Madame Arcádina is inclined to grant the clothes, though not the journey, but in the next breath she declares that she cannot manage even the clothes; she hasn't any money. Sorin laughs, but seeing that she is angry says she is a large-hearted, admirable woman. She begins to cry as she repeats that she has no money.

A sudden attack of faintness seizes Sorin, and in alarm Madame Arcádina calls for help. Constantine comes in, wearing a bandage about his head, but the unfortunate invalid quickly rallies and smilingly reassures them as he swallows a little water. He will be able to go to town after all, but he will go and lie down first.

Constantine asks his mother to change his bandage, and while she is doing so he asks her if she will not lend his uncle enough money to enable him to stay in town for a while, it is so much better there for his health. But she informs him that she has not any money; she is an actress,

not a banker. She asks him to promise that while she is away he will not play "chik-chik" again, alluding playfully to the click of a pistol lock. He assures her that it will not happen again. He had lost all self-control in a moment of mad despair.

Trep. These last few days I have loved you just as tenderly and trustfully as when I was a child. I have nobody left now but you. But why, oh, why, do you submit to this man's influence?

Arc. You don't understand him, Constantine. He has the noblest nature in the world. . . .

Trep. Yet when he was told that I meant to challenge him to fight, his noble nature did not prevent him from playing the coward. He is going away. It's an ignominious flight!

Arc. What rubbish! It was I who asked him to go.

Trep. The noblest nature in the world! Here are you and I almost quarrelling about him, and where is he? In the garden or the drawing-room laughing at us, improving Nina's mind, and trying to persuade her that he's a genius.

Arc. It seems to give you pleasure to try and hurt my feelings. I respect Trigórin and I must ask you not to abuse him to my face.

Trep. And I *don't* respect him. You want *me* to believe him a genius, too; but you must excuse me, I can't tell lies; his writings make me sick.

Arc. This is mere envy. Conceited people with no talent have no resource but to jeer at really talented people. It relieves their feelings, no doubt!

Trep. [*ironically*]. Really talented people! [*Angry.*] I am more talented than all of you put together if it comes to that! [*Tearing off the bandages.*] You apostles of the commonplace have taken the front seat in all the arts for yourselves and call nothing but what you do yourselves legitimate and real; you persecute and stifle all the rest. I don't believe in any of you; I don't believe in *you* and I don't believe in *him!*

Arc. Decadent!

Trep. Go back to your beloved theatre and act your pitiful stupid plays!

Arc. I never acted in such plays. Leave me! You

cannot even write a miserable vaudeville if you try! Kiev-artisan!* Parasite!

Trep. Skinflint!

Arc. Ragamuffin! [TREPLEF *sits down and cries quietly.*] You insignificant nobody! [*Walking up and down agitatedly.*] Don't cry, Don't cry, I say. [*Crying.*] Please don't cry. [*Kissing his forehead, cheeks, and head.*] My darling child, forgive me. . . . Forgive your wicked mother! Forgive your unhappy mother!

Trep. [*embracing her*]. If only you knew! I have lost everything. She doesn't love me and I cannot write any more . . . all my hopes are lost.

Arc. Don't lose heart. It will be all right in the end. He is going away; she will love you again. [*Wiping away his tears.*] Stop crying. We are friends once more.

Trep. [*kissing her hands*]. Yes, mother.

Arc. [*tenderly*]. Be friends with him, too. You mustn't have a duel. You won't have one?

Trep. Very well. But you mustn't let me meet him any more, mother. It hurts me; it is too much for me. [*Enter* TRIGÓRIN.] There! I will go away. [*Hastily puts the medicaments away in the cupboard.*] The doctor shall bandage me when he comes.

Trig. [*looking for the place in a book*]. Page 121. Lines 11 and 12. Ha! [*Reading.*] "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

[TREPLEF *picks up his bandage and goes.*

Arc. [*looking at the time*]. The horses will soon be round.

Trig. [*to himself*]. "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it."

Arc. You've got your things all packed, I hope?

Trig. [*impatiently*]. Yes, yes. [*Reflectively.*] Why do I hear the sound of anguish in this cry of a pure spirit? Why does my heart sink so painfully? "If ever my life can be of use to you, come and take it." [*To* ARCÁDINA.] Let us stay another day. [*She shakes her head.*] Let us stay.

Arc. Dear friend, I know what makes you want to stay. You should have some self-control. You've lost your senses a little; come back to reason.

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*Treplef's father was an artisan from Kiev, and afterward an actor.

Trig. And do you, too, come back to reason; be thoughtful and considerate, I beseech you; look at all this like a real friend. [*Pressing her hand.*] You are capable of a sacrifice. Be kind and set me free!

Arc. [*in deep agitation*]. Are you so much in love?

Trig. Something beckons me toward her. Perhaps this is the very thing that I really need. . . .

Arc. The love of a provincial girl? Oh, how little you know yourself.

Trig. People sometimes sleep as they walk; and even while I talk to you, it is as if I were asleep and saw her in my dreams. . . . Wonderful sweet visions possess me. . . . Set me free!

Arc. [*trembling*]. No, no. I am an ordinary woman; I cannot be talked to so. Don't torment me, Boris. I am frightened.

Trig. If you will try you can be an extraordinary woman. A sweet poetical young love, wafting me away into the world of reveries, there is nothing on earth can give happiness like that. Such a love I have never yet experienced. As a young man I had no time; I was wearing out editors' thresholds, struggling with poverty* . . . and now at last it stands before me beckoning, this love. . . . Should I not be a fool to fly from it?

Arc. [*angrily*]. You have gone out of your mind.

Trig. Who cares?

Arc. You are all banded together to-day to torment me. [*Crying.*]

Trig. [*taking his head between his hands*]. She doesn't understand. She refuses to understand.

Arc. Am I so old and ugly already that men can say what they like about other women to me? [*Embracing and kissing him.*] Oh, you are mad, mad! My darling, wonderful Boris! Last page of my life! [*Kneeling.*] My joy, my pride, my bliss. [*Embracing his knees.*] If you desert me even for an hour, I cannot survive it, I shall go out of my mind, my splendid incomparable friend, my king.

*So Tchekhof himself complained that success had come to him too late in life. He had spent his strength to no purpose in the struggle for existence ("Pámyati," 162). He used to support all his family by writing for comic papers when he was still a student at the University.

Trig. Some one might come in. [*Helping her to rise.*]

Arc. Who cares? I am not ashamed of my love for you. [*Kissing his hands.*] You are rash and wild, my treasure; what you want to do is madness; you shall not, I will not let you. [*Laughing.*] You are mine! mine! This forehead is mine, these eyes are mine, this lovely silky hair is mine. . . . You are all mine! You are so clever, so gifted, the best of all the writers of the day, you are the only hope of Russia. . . . You have such a gift of sincerity, simplicity, freshness, and bracing humor. . . . In a single stroke you give the essence of a character or a landscape; your people are all alive. Oh, no one can read you without delight! Do you think this is mere incense and flattery? Come, look me in the eyes, right in the eyes. Do I look like a liar? You see, there is nobody but me who knows your true value; nobody; I am the only person who tells you the truth, my precious darling. . . . You'll come? Say you will. You won't desert me?

Trig. I have no will of my own. I never had a will of my own. Weak-kneed, flabby, and submissive; everything that women hate. Take me, carry me away, but never let me stir an inch from your side.

Arc. [*to herself*]. He's mine! [*Carelessly.*] Well, stay if you like. I'll go to-day and you follow a week later. After all, why should you hurry?

Trig. No. We'll go together.

He takes out his notebook and enters an odd expression that he heard that morning. Several members of the household come in. It is time for the guests to start. They hand Madame Arcádina her hat, mantle, gloves, and parasol. She gives one of the servants a ruble, the equivalent of fifty cents, to divide among three, and all go out.

Trig. [*coming back*]. I've left my stick behind. I think she's out there on the verandah. [*Goes L. and meets* NINA, *entering.*] Ah, it's you. We're off.

Nina. I felt that we should meet again. [*Agitatedly.*] Boris Alexéyevitch, I have made up my mind beyond recall; the die is cast; I am going on the stage. To-morrow I shall be gone from here; I am leaving my father; I am giving up everything and beginning a new life. I am going

where you are going . . . to Moscow. We shall meet there.

Trig. [*looking round*]. Stop at the "Slavyansky Bazaar." Let me know at once. Molchanóvska, Grokhólsky's house . . . I'm in a hurry. . . . [*A pause.*]

Nina. One minute more.

Trig. [*murmuring*]. How beautiful you are! . . . What joy to think that we shall meet again so soon. [*She lays her head on his bosom.*] I shall see these lovely eyes once more, this inexpressibly tender, charming smile, this sweet face, this expression of angelic purity. . . . My darling! [*A long kiss.*]

Two years later Constantine is beginning to taste success as a writer. He is still living at his uncle's house in the country. One of the drawing-rooms has been converted into a study for him. Sorin is afraid of solitude and thinks he cannot live without Constantine. Twilight is deepening in the evening, and a lamp has been lit on the table. The wind howls in the trees and chimneys.

A storm which has raged for two days has kept Medvédenko and his wife from returning to their home. He is distressed at having left the baby so long. Masha tells him to ask her father for a horse, and says that he can go himself if he wants to so much.

Masha's mother comes in with Constantine, carrying pillows and blankets, and explains that Sorin wants his bed made in his nephew's room. Medvédenko takes himself off. Pauline sees a manuscript on the table, and remarks that no one ever imagined that Constantine would become a real writer. She thinks he has become very handsome, too. Stroking his hair, she asks him if he cannot be kinder to her Masha. Constantine leaves the room silently. Masha says that the authorities have promised to transfer her husband to another district. Once they get there she shall forget everything; she will tear it out by the roots.

Dorn and Medvédenko wheel Sorin into the room in a chair. He imagines that he is dangerously ill at last, and that his sister is there because the doctor sent for her. Madame Arcádina has gone to the station to meet Trigórin, and is expected back momentarily. The invalid complains

peevishly that although he is at the point of death nobody will give him any medicine. Dorn replies that he will give him anything he wants, and sings, "The moon swims by in the clouds of night."

Constantine has been playing a melancholy waltz in another room, and now returns and sits on a footstool at his uncle's feet. Masha cannot keep her eyes off him. Dorn asks him how Nina Zarétchnaya is now.

Trep. She's quite well, I imagine.

Dorn. I was told she was living some curious sort of life. What was it?

Trep. It's a long story, doctor.

Dorn. Well, make it a short one. [*A pause.*]

Trep. She ran away from home and went to Trigórin. That you know.

Dorn. Yes, I know.

Trep. She had a baby. The baby died. Trigórin got tired of her and went back to his old ties, as one might have expected. Besides, he never gave up his old ties, but, like the backboneless creature he is, managed to carry on with both at the same time. As far as I can make out from what I've heard, Nina's private life has been disastrous.

Dorn. And on the stage?

Trep. Still worse, I should say. She came out first at a summer theatre near Moscow, and then went off to the provinces. I kept her in sight for some time and followed her wherever she went. She was always trying to do big parts, but acted crudely and inartistically, mouthing her words and making awkward gestures. There were moments when she showed some talent in screaming and dying, but they were only moments.

Dorn. Still, you think she has some gift for it?

Trep. It was hard to make out. I should think so certainly. I saw her, but she refused to see me, and the servants wouldn't let me into her rooms. I understood her mood and did not insist on an interview. [*A pause.*] What else is there to tell you? Afterward, when I got back home, I used to get letters from her, nice, friendly, interesting letters; she didn't complain, but I could see that she was profoundly unhappy; in every line one felt her strained and tortured nerves. Her imagination was a little disordered. She signed herself "Seagull." In "Rus-

alka" the miller says he is a raven; so she said in her letters that she was a seagull. And now she's here.

Nina has actually come back, and is staying at the inn. She will not see any one. Her father and stepmother refuse to know her.

Madame Arcádina comes back with Trigórin. He takes Sorin to task for being ill, and is delighted to see Masha, whom he questions about herself with the impersonal interest of a novelist. He is working harder than ever and has to be in Moscow the next day. He wants to look round the garden where the play was acted. He has a subject ready for writing and wishes to refresh his memory as to the scene of action.

Things for a game of loto are brought out and the company sit down at a card table. Shamrayef will not let Medvédenko have a horse, and the schoolmaster starts off to walk the four miles in the rain. Madame Arcádina recounts some of the details of her last tour, its triumphs and ovations.

Constantine goes out. Shamrayef observes that the papers abuse the young writer a good deal. The trouble seems to be, according to Trigórin, that he cannot seem to get into his natural stride; there is always something queer and vague about his work. Dorn is convinced that Constantine will do something some time. His stories are bright and full of color. Dorn feels them very deeply. When the game is finished they go to supper.

Constantine comes back again and prepares to write. Some one knocks at a window. He looks out without seeing any one, calls "Who's there," and goes out on the verandah. A moment later he returns with Nina Zarétchnaya.

Trep. Nina! Nina! [*She lays her head on his bosom and sobs restrainedly. He continues with emotion.*] Nina! Nina! Is it you? Is it you? I had a sort of presentiment; all day my heart has been in anguish. [*He takes off her hat and cloak.*] Oh, my dearest, my loveliest! She has come at last! We mustn't cry, we mustn't cry!

Nina. Is there any one here?

Trep. No one.

Nina. Lock the door; they may come in.

Trep. No one will come in.

Nina. I know that Irina Nikolayevna is here. Lock the door.

Trep. [*locks the door R. and goes to the door L.*]. There's no lock on this one. I'll put a chair against it. [*Puts an armchair against the door.*] Don't be afraid, no one will come in.

Nina [*looking him hard in the face*]. Let me look at you. [*Looking round the room.*] How warm and cozy. . . . This used to be the drawing-room. Am I much changed?

Trep. Yes. You're thinner and your eyes are bigger. Nina, how strange it is to see you at last! Why would you not let me in when I visited you? Why have you not come before? I know you have been here nearly a week. I've been to the inn several times every day and stood under your window like a beggar.

Nina. I was afraid you must hate me. I dream every night that you look at me and do not recognize me. If only you knew! Every day since I came I've been walking up here by the lake. I've been so often near the house but did not dare to come in. Let's sit down. [*They sit.*] Let's sit here and talk and talk. How pleasant it is here, how warm and comfortable. . . . Do you hear the wind? There's a passage in Turgenef: "Blessed is he who sits beneath a roof on such a night, in his own comfortable corner." I am a seagull. No, that's wrong. [*Rubs her forehead.*] What was I saying? Yes . . . Turgenef. . . . "And the Lord help all homeless wanderers." . . . I'm all right. [*Sobbing.*]

Trep. Nina! you're crying again. . . . Nina!

Nina. I'm all right. I feel the better for it . . . I haven't cried for two years. Yesterday evening I came into the garden to see if our stage was still standing. It's still there. I cried for the first time in two years, and felt relieved, and easier in my mind. See, I'm not crying any more. [*Taking his hand.*] So you've become a writer. You're a writer and I'm an actress. We're both caught up in the vortex. Once I lived so happily, with a child's happiness; I would wake of a morning and sing with glee; I loved you and dreamed of fame; and now? Early tomorrow morning I must travel to Yeletz, third class, with peasants, and at Yeletz I shall have to put up with

the attentions of the educated shopkeepers. . . . How brutal life is!

Trep. Why Yeletz?

Nina. I've accepted an engagement for the whole winter. I must start to-morrow.

Trep. Nina, I cursed you and hated you at first; I tore up your letters and your photographs; but all the time I knew that my heart was bound to you forever. Try as I may, I cannot cease loving you, Nina. Ever since I lost you and began to get my stories printed, my life has been intolerable. How I have suffered! . . . My youth was snatched from me, as it were, and I feel as if I had lived for ninety years. I call to you; I kiss the ground where you have passed; wherever I look I see your face with that caressing smile which shone upon me in the best years of my life. . . .

Nina [*wildly*]. Why does he say that? Why does he say that?

Trep. I am alone in the world, unwarmed by any affection; it chills me like a dungeon, and whatever I write is hollow, dull, and gloomy. Stay here, Nina, I beseech you, or let me come away with you! [NINA *puts on her hat and cloak quickly.*] Nina, why are you doing that? For God's sake, Nina . . . [*He watches her putting on her things. A pause.*]

Nina. My trap is at the garden gate. Don't come and see me out. I'll manage all right. [*Crying.*] Give me some water.

Trep. [*giving her water*]. Where are you going to?

Nina. Back to town. [*A pause.*] Is Irina Nikolayevna here?*

Trep. Yes. . . . Uncle Peter was taken ill on Thursday; we wired for her to come.

Nina. Why do you say you kissed the ground where I had walked? You ought to kill me. [*Leaning against the table.*] Oh, I am so tired! If I could only rest . . . if I could only rest. [*Raising her head.*] I am a seagull . . . no, that's wrong. I am an actress. Yes, yes. [*Hearing* ARCÁDINA *and* TRIGÓRIN *laughing, she listens, then runs to the door R. and looks through the keyhole.*] So

*Madame Arcádina.

he's here, too! . . . [*Coming back to* TREPLEF.] Yes, yes. . . . I'm all right. . . . He didn't believe in the stage; he always laughed at my ambitions; little by little I came not to believe in it either; I lost heart. . . . And on the top of that the anxieties of love, jealousy, perpetual fear for the child . . . I became trivial and commonplace; I acted without meaning . . . I did not know what to do with my hands, or how to stand on the stage, I had no control over my voice. You can't imagine how you feel when you know that you are acting atrociously. I am a seagull. No, that's wrong. . . . Do you remember, you shot a seagull? "A man comes along by chance and sees her, and, just to amuse himself, ruins her. . . . A subject for a short story." . . . No, that's not it. . . . [*Rubbing her forehead.*] What was I talking about? . . . Ah, about acting. I'm not like that now . . . I'm a real actress now. When I act I rejoice, I delight in it; I am intoxicated and feel that I am splendid. Since I got here I have been walking all the time and thinking, thinking and feeling how my inner strength grows day by day . . . and now I see at last, Constantine, that in our sort of work, whether we are actors or writers, the chief thing is not fame or glory, not what I dreamed of, but the gift of patience. One must bear one's cross and have faith. My faith makes me suffer less, and when I think of my vocation I am no longer afraid of life.

Trep. [*sadly*]. You have found your road, you know where you are going; but I am still adrift in a welter of images and dreams, and cannot tell what use it all is to any one. I have no faith and I do not know what my vocation is.

Nina [*listening*]. 'Sh. . . . I'm going. Good-bye. When I am a great actress, come and see me act. You promise? And now . . . [*Shaking his hand.*] It's late. I can hardly stand up, I'm so tired and hungry. . . .

Trep. Stay here. I'll get you some supper.

Nina. No, no. Don't see me out; I can find my way. The trap is quite near. . . . So she brought him here with her? Well, well, it's all one. When you see Trigórin don't tell him I've been. . . . I love him; yes, I love him more than ever. . . . "A subject for a short

story." . . . I love him, love him passionately, desperately. How pleasant it was in the old days, Constantine! You remember? How clear and warm, how joyful and how pure our life was! And our feelings—they were like the sweetest, daintiest flowers. . . . . You remember? [*Reciting.*] "Men and lions, eagles and partridges, antlered deer, geese, spiders, the silent fishes dwelling in the water, starfish and tiny creatures invisible to the eye—these and every form of life, ay, every form of life, have ended their melancholy round and become extinct. Thousands of centuries have passed since this earth bore any living being on its bosom. All in vain does yon pale moon light her lamp. No longer do the cranes wake and cry in the meadows; the hum of the cockchafers is silent in the linden groves. . . ." [*She embraces* TREPLEF *impulsively and runs out by the glass door.*]

Trep. [*after a pause*]. I hope nobody will meet her in the garden and tell mother. Mother might be annoyed. . . . [*For two minutes he silently tears up all his manuscripts and throws them under the table, then unlocks the door R., and exit.*]

Dorn [*trying to open the door R.*]. Funny. It seems to be locked. . . . [*Entering and putting back the armchair in its place.*] H'm, obstacle race.

Enter ARCÁDINA *and* PAULINE; *behind them* YAKOF, *with bottles, and* MASHA; *then* SHAMRAYEF *and* TRIGÓRIN.

Arc. Put the claret and beer here on the table for Boris, Alexéyevitch. We'll drink while we play. Now come along and sit down, all of you.

Pauline [*to* YAKOF]. And bring tea at once. [*Lighting the candles and sitting at the card table.*]

Shamrayef [*taking* TRIGÓRIN *to the cupboard*]. There's the thing I was talking of. . . . [*Gets a stuffed seagull out.*] You asked to have it done.

Trig. [*looking at the seagull*]. I don't remember. [*After thinking.*] No, I don't remember.

[*Report of a pistol behind the scenes, R. Every one starts.*]

Arc. [*alarmed*]. What's that?

Dorn. It's all right. I expect something's busted in my travelling medicine-chest. Don't be alarmed. [*Exit R., and returns a moment later.*] As I expected. My ether

bottle's burst. [*Singing.*] "Once more, once more before thee, love."

Arc. [*sitting at the table*]. Good heavens, I was quite frightened. It reminded me of that time when . . . [*Covering her face with her hands.*] I felt quite faint. . . .

Dorn [*taking up* TREPLEF'S *magazine and turning over the pages; to* TRIGÓRIN.] There was an article in this paper a month or two ago . . . a letter from America, and I wanted to ask you, among other things . . . [*Puts his arm round* TRIGÓRIN'S *waist and brings him to the footlights.*] . . . I'm very much interested in the question . . . [*In a lower tone.*] Get Irina Nikolayevna away from here. The fact is, Constantine has shot himself. . . .

JOHN THE BAPTIST

By Hermann Sudermann

First played in Berlin in 1898.

Argument: John the Baptist is anxiously awaiting the coming of the Messiah when Herod brings the wife of his brother Philip to Jerusalem and goes through a marriage ceremony with her in the Temple. The outraged people look to John for guidance and he to the Messiah, while the Queen insists that John shall be put to death for stirring up the people against her, and the Princess Salome, whose advances John has rejected, also demands his head. What is John's fate, and does the Messiah come in time to counsel him?

A crowd has collected at night in a rocky place outside Jerusalem to meet John the Baptist. When he arrives the people crowd about him with the tale of their sufferings. John tells them of Him Who cometh Who will bring rejoicing in Israel. He tells a paralytic that he will thank the Lord with shouts of joy for every inch of the road he has crawled along on inflamed knees when he beholdeth Him for Whom their soul longeth and hopeth, for Whose coming they wait and watch by the roadside, looking toward the East.

Word is brought to John that Herod is expected the next day with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, whom she has deserted, and that with them is Salome, her daughter and Philip's. Herod intends to marry Herodias, they say, and on the first day of the Passover present her to the people. John declares he will protest against this infamous crime.

In a square in front of the palace of Herod await the populace, inflamed by John's preaching, and John, having

finished the work for which he came, is about to return to the wilderness when his disciples beg him to remain as a leader of the people. Certain Pharisees stop John and question him about the Messiah he is heralding, and as to how he keeps the law.

John creates a sensation among the people by answering that he has nothing to do with the law of which they and their like set up to be guardians. Their hand lies heavily on the people, he says, and their well-being is its affliction. Who are they, he asks, that they should look on the law as their special inheritance and possession? But the people crawl under a heavy scourge. One of the Pharisees replies that thus have rebels always spoken, and the end hath been always the cross and the gallows. The Lord, they say, hath twice redeemed his people through the law. Therefore they guard the law, through which lies redemption.

When some pilgrims arrive at the fountain, a woman with a heavy burden comes accidentally near one of the Pharisees, and he warns her angrily not to touch him lest he become unclean. Simon, a Galilean, advises her not to touch the Pharisee lest she become unclean, for the Pharisees who follow the teachings of the law so scrupulously, he says, are unclean from within. Greater than law, he continues, greater than sacrifice, is love. John approaches in great excitement and asks who taught him that, but the Galilean shakes his head without replying. The Pharisees accuse John of poisoning the people with foul water, and ask him where is his Messiah. The people take up the question and are beginning to press it when a diversion is caused by Herod entering the square with his train.

The guards clear the square and all flee before them but John, who stands his ground and measures Herod with his glance. Salome notices him and calls Herod's attention to the strange figure. She says he has stood and watched them everywhere they have passed. When the royal party have gone on, John tells his disciples to seek the man from Galilee and bring him to him.

Salome and her companions are conversing in a hall of the palace. She has noticed that she is not displeasing to her uncle, Herod, and says that if her mother scolds her

she will know how to tease her mother. From a window they see John the Baptist outside in the street, and they are watching him when Herodias enters. Herodias asks the maidens, who are Judeans, if any of them knows John the Baptist, this man who is stirring up rebellion in the streets. Miriam replies that she does, for the night before she sat praying at his feet. Herodias tells her to go and bring him in. At first Salome does not want Miriam, who is her favorite, to go, but then she begs her mother's forgiveness. She and her mother are unlike others, she says, for they sting those they love and kiss those they hate. Laughing, Herodias kisses Salome.

Herod comes to find Herodias. Troubles are growing thick about him and he is in a gloomy mood. He tells Herodias she has come to Jerusalem too soon, for his wife's father is preparing to make war on him and he has no army; he is threatened with disgrace in Rome, his brother curses him, and Judea points at him the finger of scorn. She asks him if he has forgotten the days of eloquent looks and silent vows, when every breath was a longing desire and every word a feast.

Herod's attention wanders from her as he sees Salome looking down at him from a balcony. Herodias says that she does not beg of him a nightly dole of caresses; she exists no longer as his beloved, but she is now his ruling mistress. Herod replies that she raves.

Herodias. So real and positive is my hold over thee, just now when thou didst say I raved thou wast reflecting how thou couldst best get rid of me. . . . Thou fool; then get rid of thy wakeful nights, the inheritance of that greater than thou, whom thou wilt never equal.

Herod. Woman . . . what . . . [*His words choke in his throat.*]

Herodias. Speak out what thou hast to say. If thou no longer needest me for love, thou mayest still require me as a listener and adviser.

Herod strides up and down in great excitement, railing at his impotence. He is as headstrong as his father, the great Herod, but, bound to Rome, can do nothing. She asks if he would doubt himself less if the priests of the Temple stood between him and the people. He declares that he does not doubt himself, and that what she suggests

can never happen. When two messengers from the Temple are announced he fears that his doom has already overtaken him.

Herod [*with a laugh of rage and fear*]. Are their trumpets already sounding on the road? Hath the great curse already reached the door?

Herodias. Thou art wrong, my friend. Only a little blessing scratches at the door. . . . If it pleaseth thee, let it come in.

Herod. Thou dreamest.

Herodias. Listen to me! Why did I come before thee in haste to inhabit this empty house? . . . Because every hour since I came I have been negotiating with the priests——

Herod. Thou?

Herodias. What if instead of hiding the sinning woman from the people, thou, with head held aloft, repairest with her to the Temple? Would it not be an ironical event if the High Priest, with the same air of patriarchal servility with which he greeted the virtuous Mariamne, also smiled a welcome to thy brother's runaway wife?

Herod. With what sum hast thou purchased this?

Herodias. When it is given, it will be a present, not a purchase.

Herod. Only one who knows not these butchers of the High Altar could believe you.

Herodias. Well, these are the terms. [*In a low voice.*] If we were to promise never again to aspire in Rome to the sceptre of Judea—[*scoffingly*]—then they might consider.

Herod. And what answer didst thou make to such excessive, such——

Herodias. I promised. . . . What else should I do?

Herod [*pointing to himself*]. Even before this booty was thine, thou hast betrayed it?

Herodias. I fancied I heard thee crying out just now for a sword. [*Smiling.*] When thou art king, thou wilt, of course, kill all whom thou hast promised not to be king! That is the same thing as if thou hadst never promised it.

Herod [*staring at her*]. Woman!

Herodias. Believest thou still that I hurried here only for the sake of a kiss?

Herod. I shudder at thee. But even if the priests be

won over, there remain the people, the hydra-headed; thou knowest not the people. They once, it is said, hurled sacrificial victims at the head of their king, they slew Barachia's son between the Temple and the altar. And besides, dost thou not know that John the Baptist is in the town?

Herodias. The Baptist! Leave the Baptist to me.

Herod. I warn thee, approach him only with a weapon in thy hand!

Herodias laughs.

The hall is empty when John the Baptist is brought in. Salome looks down from the balcony. She throws roses to him while her maidens sing a love song, and then descends and tells him she is a rose of Sharon and a flower of the valley. He inquires if she knows how abhorred the house of Herod is, and if she keepeth her soul innocent among the guilty. She has heard that youth knows nothing of guilt and guiltiness.

Herodias returns to the hall. She says she will not reproach John for having incited the people, but asks if he was not too proud. He replies that he has not come to hear her praise or her blame, nor to ask if she is going to the Temple with Herod on the Passover. She warns him not to let loose his wrath, and tries to dazzle him with offers of power and splendor. Then she asks if his heart has not trembled at the sight of Salome's loveliness.

John [*after further silence*]. Thou wouldst sell thyself to me! Dost thou know thy own price? A grain of barley would be too dear . . . for thy name is courtezan, and adultress is written on thy brow.

Herodias [*infuriated*]. Thou—thou——

Salome [*falling into her arms*]. Mother!

Herodias [*controlling herself, haughtily and contemptuously*]. I should have thee seized on the instant, only thou makest sport for me. And if not quite intoxicated with thy own superiority, listen to me once more. He who thinketh himself designed to be a judge over men should take part in the life of men, should be human among human beings.

John [*impressed*]. What . . . didst thou say?

Herodias. But thou seemest to me so isolated from thy fellowmen that the throb of a human heart itself is nothing to thee. . . . Thou hast avoided, cowardlike, all

contact with sin and guilt in thy waste places, and now creepest forth to condemn others as guilty. The scorching winds of thy desert may perhaps have taught thee hate . . . but what knowest thou of love? of those who live and die for the sake of their love?

John. Thou, too, speakest of love . . . thou, too?

Herodias. See! I am laughing at thee, great prophet. [*She laughs.*]

Salome. Mother, look at him . . . be silent!

John. Thy poisoned arrows are well aimed, and hit their mark! But . . . [*pointing to the window*] . . . see there, the Lord's people . . . they gnash their teeth against thee, for thou hast taken their bitter bread out of their mouths and dissipated their miserable joys. . . . Thou sayest that I know them not. . . . Yet I know their heart's desire . . . for I have created it; I have put my life at the service of that desire, and I cry to thee, "Woe! thou that hast contaminated it for them. . . . Thou enervatest the strength of their young men and exposest the shame of their young women. Thou sowest scoffings where I thought to reap faith. . . . And if thou bendest the High and Mighty to be the footstool of thy lusts, I will fling the poor and humble in thy path, that they may trample thee beneath their feet. . . . Woe to thee, and woe to him who shareth thy adulterous couch! . . . Woe, too, to this youthful body that cringes under the scourge of thy blood! Woe! Woe!"

Herodias [*springing up and going to the door on right*]. The guards shall seize him. . . . Guards! . . . [*She wrenches the door open. Two guards enter.*]

Herodias. Lead this man. . . . [*She hesitates as she meets* JOHN'S *eyes.*]

John [*smiling*]. Now, look to it, what thou dost with me!

Herodias. Lead this man . . . out . . . into the street. . . . [*She staggers to the divan.*]

Salome. Thou camest in flames of fire! . . . .

John walks to the door.

Word is brought to John at the house of one of his disciples that Herod and Herodias are going to the Temple before the crowd collect in the morning, and will line the

way with their household servants, whom they have provided with arms. John does not know what counsel to give, and tells his disciples to redouble their efforts to find the Galilean. At last word is brought that the Galilean has been found, guarded by soldiers and charged with having blasphemed God.

Two men from Galilee are spending the night with other pilgrims near the gate of the Temple, and there John finds them. When he inquires if they have heard of any prophet in their land they tell him of Jesus of Nazareth and his miracles.

When at last Herod and Herodias approach, great excitement prevails among the people. Some of them are for stoning Herod and the woman. Others advise waiting to see what John will do. John is still undecided. One of his disciples puts a stone in his hand and he starts to throw it, saying, "In the name of Him——" but he hesitates, and then adds—"Who command me to love thee." He does not throw the stone, but is seized by Herod's servants. As Herod and Herodias walk up into the Temple the people cry, "Woe! Woe!"

Herod has removed his court to Galilee and brought with him John the Baptist as a prisoner. Salome comes into the prison courtyard in search of a ball which she says has fallen inside. The jailer who admits her asks if she does not know that the gate is full of danger for Herod's children. Two sons of Herod the Great came through, he says, before they were sentenced. Salome asks him to tell her of the new prisoner. He confirms her suspicion that John the Baptist is there. She commands him to bring the Baptist before her, but the horrified man declares he cannot do so. Warning is given that Herod is coming, and Salome and her maidens hide.

Herod gives orders to have the disciples of the Baptist driven away from the doors of the prison. He sees Salome peeping out at him from behind a bench and guesses who she is in spite of her veil. She pretends that she came to the prison yard out of curiosity to see him, having heard that he was coming there. She suggests that he might win the favor of the people by sparing the Baptist. He finds her unlike her mother in the counsel she gives, and

asks her to unveil herself. She will not do so when alone in his presence, she says, but with others present she would be willing, and would even dance for him at a feast. Then she asks him to treat the prisoner humanely, and leaves the courtyard with her maidens.

Herod is desirous of knowing why John spared him at the Temple, and has him brought out and questions him. John says that Herod would not understand his reason for not throwing the stone if he should tell him. Thinking John defiant because he is in chains, Herod tells the jailer to remove the shackles and go away with the guard. Now, he tells John he is a free man, and says that if he preaches repentance to preach to him. Again John says that Herod would not understand; he spared Herod because his heart failed him. Herod thinks that now John is flattering him because he is free.

John. Thou hast not laid me in chains, and canst not loosen me from them.

Herod. What . . . and yet I made thee falter?

John. It was Another who threw thee in my way. . . . And so my heart failed me.

Herod. Tell me, Baptist—I call thee by the name I have heard people speak of thee by, and I hope thou wilt not be angry—tell me, Who is that King of the Jews whose image thou danglest before the people? . . . See, the guards are gone, and thy confidence shall be rewarded. Tell me, who is it?

John. Sire, I know not.

Herod. And so thou deniest thy own creature?

John. What is my own I deny.

Herod. Ha, ha, ha! I have half a mind to summon my little Greek that he may go to school under thee. Listen —[*in a low voice*]—I, too, have heard of a King of the Jews who will come with a sword drawn above his head, and he will spare no one who doth not serve him at the right moment.

John [*eagerly*]. Who is it, of whom thou speakest?

Herod. Master, I do not know. Thou seest thus that I, too, have a burden of secret anxiety oppressing me, and await the sunrise. . . . But let me speak with thee seriously, Baptist. Thou hurlest thy arrows of reproach at me on account of the woman I stole. . . . I could

almost pity thee for that. Thou, a great man, mightst have chosen a greater subject than a woman. And knowest thou every day she sharpens those arrows herself for me? . . . But enough of that. The smiths say that good metal rings true even when it is cracked, and thou ringest true. How dost thou manage it? . . . I pray thee teach me the way. . . . What, silent again?

John. Methinks I know you now, ye smiling scoffers. Ye grow fat on the wit of the market-places; but hunger seizes you, and ye then lift your eyes to the earnest ones, walking on the mountain-tops.

At last Herod asks if it was for that other who cometh that he did not throw the stone. If it was in His Name that John desisted, Herod says, he will lose no sleep over this Jewish king. He calls the jailer and tells him the prisoner shall go in and out as he likes, for he is not dangerous. No sooner has Herod left the courtyard than Salome returns. She informs John that he owes his freedom to her, and asks in return that he shall give her salvation. He inquires what has become of Miriam.

Salome. I *had* her. Now she is dead.

John bows his head. His suspicions realized.

Salome. I had her slain because she went to thee. No one shall go to thee except me. Seest thou now how pious I am? Seest thou? My soul feels thy strength, and feels it with joy; for I have never seen any one so strong as thou art. I have made thank offerings and secret vows like those the Psalms sing of. Then I have been forth in the gloaming to seek thy countenance and the light of thy eyes. And I have decked my bed with beautiful, many-colored rugs from Egypt, and I have sprinkled my pillows with myrtle, aloes, and cinnamon. I will give thee my fair young body, thou barbarian among the sons of Israel! Come, let us make love till morning. And my playmates shall keep watch on the threshold, and greet the dawn with their harps.

John. Verily, thou art powerful; thou carriest the world in thy arms . . . for thou art sin itself.

Salome. Yes. Sweet as sin. . . . That am I.

John's disciples come to him. Josaphat reproaches him for weakness. He says John took the law from them and asks what he gave instead. He is going to Jesus of

Nazareth. John tells the others to accompany Josaphat and wherever they find Him to ask, "Art Thou He Who cometh, or shall we wait for another?" And when He has answered, John tells them, to come back quickly for his longing is great.

While Herod is overseeing the preparations for a banquet at which he is going to entertain Vitellius, the Roman governor, Herodias comes to tell him that she will permit Salome to dance. He inquires what reward she will demand, but she replies that Salome will ask. Beside Vitellius and his suite, Herod's courtiers are at the feast. Vitellius interrupts the recitation of an ode in his honor, greatly bored, and Herod suggests that they have music.

The harps are being tuned when Herodias leads in Salome, thickly veiled. A murmur of astonishment runs around the table. One courtier calls the attention of another to Herodias. He thinks her look betokens that some one will lose his head, whom he does not know.

Salome has extricated herself from the arms of Herodias and, accompanied by exclamations of admiration and delight, has begun to dance. Her dance becomes wilder and more abandoned; she gradually loosens her veil, then covers herself with it again in voluptuous playfulness, till at last, quite unveiled, she stands with the upper part of her body apparently unclothed. She sinks on her knees half exhausted, half in homage, before Herod. All break into ecstasies of applause. Herod rushes forward to raise her.

Herodias, who has looked on intently with a harassed expression, intervenes to stop Herod, who exchanges a hostile glance with her. He tells Salome to rise, and swears that she shall have anything for which she will ask. She replies that she desires on a dish the head of John the Baptist. Herod accuses her mother of being behind the demand, and asks Salome to take it back. She repeats that she desires him to give her the head of John the Baptist on a golden dish. Herodias reminds him that he has sworn.

John the Baptist is led in. Herod informs him that he is sorry, but that he must prepare himself to meet death. John asks for a respite. He says that he has sent out messengers and awaits their return. Salome tells John to

beseech her, but he does not do so. Word is brought that two of John's friends have come to the palace, and Herod, with the approval of Vitellius, who is less bored than he was by the ode, has them shown in. Manassa and Amarja, John's disciples, appear in the door. They seem at first as if they would rush to John, but overcome by shyness stand still.

John. What have ye to tell me?

Manassa. Master!

Herod. Speak louder, my good men! Unless ye let us participate in the news, I will have you carried off through separate doors.

Man. May we, Master?

John. Speak freely, for methinks we are alone together.

Man. We took the road in all haste to Bethesda, and at break of day we found Him there.

John. Ye found Him there?

Man. And many people were gathered about Him resting in the olive gardens, and praised the Lord for the miracle which had been done to them at that hour. And behold there was a light in every eye, and in every mouth the music of thanksgiving.

John. And He? How looked His countenance? What were His gestures?

Man. Master, I know not.

John. But ye saw Him?

Amarja. Rabbi, thou mightest as well ask, What is the face of the sun, and what the gestures of light? . . . As we beheld His smile we sank to the ground, and in our souls was a great peace.

John. And when ye had questioned Him, and He began to speak, tell me what was His manner of speech? Say; I stand here awaiting His wrath.

Amar. Rabbi. . . . He spoke to us like a brother. His speech was simple.

Man. And it was beautiful . . . like the voice of the wind which blows from the sea toward evening.

Amar. And this is what He spake: "Go and tell John what ye have seen and heard. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

John. The poor—He said the poor?

Man. And when He prepared to come hither to this town with the people who were gathered about Him, we accompanied Him as far as the gate, and then hurried on before, according to thy wish.

John. And said He nothing else to you? Reflect well.

Amar. Yes; yet one more thing. He said, "Blessed be he who hath not been offended at me." But this we could not understand.

John. But I understand it well and to whom He spoke. I have been offended, for I have not recognized Him. And my anger filled the world, for I knew Him not. Ye yourselves are my witnesses that I have said, "I am not the Christ, but one sent to prepare the way for Him that cometh." A man can take nothing to himself that is not given him by Heaven. And unto me nothing was given. The key of death . . . I held it not . . . the scales of sin were not confided to me. For out of no man's mouth may the name of sin sound, save out of the mouth of the one that loveth. But I would have scourged you with iron rods. Therefore is my kingdom come to shame, and my lips are sealed. I hear roundabout a rushing noise, as of many waters, and the divine radiance is near me. . . . A throne hath descended out of heaven amidst darts of fire. The King of Peace sitteth thereon in white robes. And His sword is called Love, and His watchword is mercy. . . . Behold He hath the bride, He is the bridegroom. But the friend of the bridegroom standeth and listeneth, and rejoiceth over the voice that is coming. The same is my joy. Now is it fulfilled. [*He stands with his arms outspread and his eyes turned toward heaven.* MANASSA *and* AMARJA *sink at his feet.*]

Vitellius. Dear friend, it seems to me that we have had enough of this maniac.

Herod [*between emotion and scorn*]. John, I am truly grieved on thy account. And when He cometh of whom thou dreamest, I will greet Him as I have greeted thee. Ha! ha! ha! Lead him to execution.

Salome. *Now, ask* me! [*As* JOHN *smilingly looks beyond her.*] Mother, will he not ask?

Vit. My friend, thy banquet has been somewhat disturbed. [*As* HEROD *stares at the door through which* JOHN

has disappeared.] No matter what I say, he does not hear me.

Herod. Exalted highness, pardon!

Salome has crossed the hall and goes stealthily to a door on left. In great curiosity she draws back the curtain, and after gazing eagerly through it, reels backward into the arms of Herodias. Outside, behind the middle curtain, an ever-increasing tumult and murmur of many voices has arisen.

Vit. Bid the women to sit down. Thou hast an ill-conducted people. They brawl in the street while we dine.

Herod. Are they already muttering about the Baptist? Gabalos, look to it, and tell them to be quiet.

Gabalos. It shall be done, Sire. [*Exit.*

Salome [*pointing to the door, the curtains of which are open*]. Mother, see what they are bringing. See! [*She rushes out.*]

Herod [*descending the steps of the dais*]. What does she want there?

Herodias. Sire, thou art of simple understanding. I advise thee to look the other way.

Herod. What is she doing?

Herodias. She is dancing! She holds the charger with the Prophet's head high in her arms, and dances.

Jabad. See, she dances!

Herod. So thou hast corrupted thy own flesh and blood. So thou wilt corrupt us all.

[HERODIAS, *smiling, shrugs her shoulders.*]

Merokles. She sways. She will fall!

[HERODIAS *goes out composedly.*]

Mero. The head is rolling on the floor!

Marcellus. Oh, horror!

[HERODIAS *comes back supporting* SALOME *in her arms.*]

Salome. Mother, where is the dish? Where is the head?

Herodias. Make obeisance. Speak thy thanks.

Salome [*before* HEROD]. Sire, I am a rose of Sharon. A flower of the valley . . . Who would thank me should pluck me . . . Oh, look at the head!

Herod. Take the women away!

[HERODIAS *curtseys, and leads, smiling, the half-swooning* SALOME *off to right.*]

Herod. Well, what is the matter?

Gab. Sire, the people will nct be restrained. Men and women in holiday raiment fill the streets and crowd on the roofs. They carry palms in their hands and sing and shout for joy.

Herod. What are they singing?

Gab. Thou knowest, Sire, I am not servile, but I scarcely like to say.

Herod. Speak!

Gab. Hosannah! to Him Who shall come. Hosannah to the King of the Jews! So they sing.

Herod [*grinding his teeth*]. I have had John beheaded. Who may this one be?

Gab. If thou wouldst see Him, Sire, they say He is coming this way.

Herod. I will see Him. I will greet Him as I promised. Ha! ha! ha! Open!

The curtains are drawn aside. One sees the roofs crowded with women waving palms. Others, with palms in their hands, climb the hilly street below. The shouting swells in volume and becomes an orderly, harmonious song.

Vit. [*who has continued sitting, turns round indignantly*]. What is going on there again?

Herod [*has grasped a goblet, and springs on the topmost step*]. Greeting to thee, my King —— of the ——

He looks, stops short . . . the goblet slips from his hand, he turns away and hides his face in his mantle. The others also stand, looking down in silent amazement. The Hosannahs rise from the street.

THE "GOOD HOPE"

By Herman Heijermans

First played in Holland in 1900.

Argument: A widow whose husband and two oldest sons have been lost at sea, unable to maintain the household, persuades her youngest boy, who has always feared death by drowning, to become one of the crew of a trawler. Losing his courage at the last moment and refusing to go although the papers are signed, the boy is dragged aboard by the harbor police, and warning comes too late from a drunken ship carpenter that the trawler is a floating coffin. Will the vessel be lost, and will the guilty owner escape punishment?

The living-room of the Widow Kneirtje's home is furnished with two beds and a chest of drawers, on which are some holy images. A door at the back, when opened, discloses a narrow, cobblestoned roadway, backed by a view of beach with the sea beyond. The widow's husband and two of her sons were lost at sea twelve years ago, but she has two younger sons left, Geert, already a man, and Barend, who is big enough but has a great terror of the sea which has swallowed up so many men of the Dutch fishing village in which he was born.

Clementine Bos, the daughter of the wealthy shipowner of the place, comes to the cottage to make sketches of some of the old fishermen, and she never fails to rally Barend, as every one else does, on his dislike for the sea. While she is talking to the boy her father comes to offer him a billet on an old lugger, the *Good Hope*, which has just been refitted. Barend replies that he wants some work on shore. His mother weeps in despair at his refusing the offer and at last, finding him resolved, puts him out of the house.

Geert has just been discharged from the navy for insubordination. Although Bos says that is the kind of fellow whom nobody wants, he offers to take him for the *Good Hope* if he returns home in season. The whistle of an incoming trawler is heard, and all go out to see what has happened. A side door opens and Geert sneaks in. He throws down a bundle tied in a red handkerchief, looks about muttering, and goes to a back cupboard where he gets a loaf of bread. Having cut a hunk off the loaf, he plumps down in a chair, lets fall the bread, and stares wrathfully before him.

Barend returns. He finds Geert pale, and thinks he must have been ill in prison. The next to discover Geert's arrival is his sweetheart, Jo. She rushes to him and throws her arms around his neck, sobbing hysterically. He makes her stop this fuss at once, saying his head cannot stand a lot of noise after six months' solitary confinement. He sends Barend out to buy gin and meat, and finds his old pipe.

Kneirtje is quite overcome at finding her boy at home, but she refuses to embrace him at first, asking what he has done to make her happy. He has only brought disgrace upon her, she complains. Geert says that all his trouble was due to a dance at the tavern the night before his ship put to sea. Jo was there and he had to introduce a quartermaster to her. Afterward on board the ship the quartermaster spoke of her as if she were any sailor's girl, and Geert hammered him on the jaw with a marlin spike. Five minutes later he was in irons.

In addition to six months' solitary confinement, Geert was suspended from the navy for ten years. They found newspapers in his bag which he was not supposed to read, and that made it worse for him. Now he wishes he could warn every boy who wants to join the navy, or bind himself for fourteen years to murder, as he calls it. He finds a medal that he won and throws it out of the window. His mother weeps silently and Barend stands dazed, as he raves about the hardships that he has suffered. He looks out of the window and sees a woman neighbor walking by. She is weeping, and he is going out to speak to her, but his mother stops him, telling him the body of the woman's husband has just been brought in on a trawler.

Encouraged by Geert's example, Barend has consented to sign with the *Good Hope*, and his mother gives him as a reward a pair of silver earrings that belonged to his father. They have little ships on them with masts and sails, and Jo thinks she ought to have them instead of a cowardly boy. Geert and Barend are to start in an hour. Some of the neighbors come in, and as the occasion is also Kneirtje's birthday, she lays out some little cakes and liqueurs. Two jolly old fellows come from the old men's home. One of them refuses to throw away his chew of tobacco, putting it away frugally in his handkerchief. The men sing sailor songs and make a great din.

A ship carpenter's assistant, Simon by name, comes in quite drunk. He apparently has something on his mind, and starts several times to impart it to Geert. Before he succeeds in doing so his daughter Marietje comes and tries to get him to go home. At this point it is noticed that Barend has disappeared. Kneirtje is very anxious, as she has accepted an advance on his pay. Geert reassures her, for he says now Barend has signed he will have to go whether he likes it or not. The men are singing the "Marseillaise" when Bos sticks his head in the window. He is in a great rage that they should be idling there when it is time they should be aboard the *Good Hope*.

The other men go, but Geert says he will wait a few minutes for Barend. Bos comes in. He asks angrily if Geert is planning to stay behind, too. He says the police have been notified that Barend has refused to go. Kneirtje is overcome with dismay. When at last Bos calls the house a dive, with its drunkenness and rioting, it is only the presence of Kneirtje and Jo that restrains Geert from attacking the shipowner. As it is, he orders him out of the cottage. Bos, in revenge, tells the old widow not to come and work for his wife any more. When Bos has gone Geert starts off for the ship with Jo.

Barend [*entering quickly from left*]. S-s-s-st!

Kneirtje. You miserable bad boy!

Bar. S-ssst!

Kneir. What sssst! I'll shout the whole village together if you don't immediately run and follow Geert and Jo.

Bar. [*panting*]. If you can keep Geert from going—call him back!

Kneir. Have you gone crazy with fear, you big coward?

Bar. [*panting*]. The *Good Hope* is no good, no good—her ribs are rotten—the planking is rotten——!

Kneir. Don't stand there telling stories to excuse yourself. After half-past two! March——!

Bar. [*almost crying*]. If you don't believe me!

Kneir. I won't listen. March! or I'll slap your face.

Bar. Strike me then! Strike me then! Ah, God! keep Geert from going! Simon the ship carpenter warned me.

Kneir. Simon the ship carpenter—that drunken sot who can't speak two words. You are a disgusting bad boy. First you sign, then you run away! Get up!

Bar. Me—you may beat me to death!—but I won't go on an unseaworthy ship!

Kneir. What do you know about it? Hasn't the ship been lying in the dry docks?

Bar. There was no caulking her any more—Simon——

Kneir. Shut your mouth with your Simon! March, take your package of chewing tobacco.

Bar. [*yelling*]. I'm not going—I'm not going. You don't know—you didn't see it! The last voyage she had a foot of water in her hold!

Kneir. The last voyage? A ship that has just returned from her fourth voyage to the herring catch and that has brought fourteen loads! Has it suddenly become unseaworthy, because you, you miserable coward, are going along?

Bar. [*with feverish anxiety*]. I looked in the hold—the barrels were floating. You can see death that is hiding down there.

Kneir. Bilge water, as in every ship! The barrels floating! Tell that to your grandmother, not to an old sailor's wife. Skipper Hengst is a child, eh! Isn't Hengst going and Mees and Gerrit and Jacob and Nellis—your own brother and Truus's little Peter? Do you claim to know more than old seamen? [*Fiercely.*] Get up! I'm not going to stand it to see you taken aboard by the police——

Bar. [*crying*]. Oh, mother dear, mother dear, don't make me go!

Kneir. O God; how you have punished me in my children—my children are driving me to beggary. I've taken an advance—Bos has refused to give me any more cleaning to do—and—and—— [*Firmly.*] Well, then, let them come for you—you'd better be taken than run away. Oh, oh, that this should happen in my family——

Bar. [*running to the cooking shed.*]

Kneir. [*barring the way*]. You'll not get out——

Bar. Let me pass, mother. I don't know what I'm doing—I might hurt——

Kneir. Now he is brave, against his sixty-year-old mother—— Raise your hand if you dare!

Bar. [*falls on a chair shaking his head between his hands*]. Oh, oh, oh—— If they take me aboard, you'll never see me again—you'll never see Geert again——

Kneir. The ship is in God's hands. It's tempting God to rave this way with fear—— [*Friendlier tone.*] Come, a man of your age must not cry like a child—come! I wanted to surprise you with father's earrings—come!

Bar. Mother, dear—I don't dare—I don't dare—I shall drown—hide me—hide me——

Kneir. Have you gone insane, boy! If I believed a word of your talk, would I let Geert go? [*Puts a package in his pocket.*] There's a package of tobacco and one of cigars. Now sit still, and I'll put in your earrings—look—[*talking as to a child*]—real silver—ships on them with sails—sit still, now—there's one—there's two—walk to the looking-glass——

Bar. [*crying*]. No—no!——

Kneir. Come, now, you're making me weak for nothing—please, dear boy—I do love you and your brother—you're all I have on earth. Come now! Every night I will pray to the good God to bring you home safely. You must get used to it, then you will become a brave seaman—and—and—— [*Cries.*] Come now, Barend, Barend! [*Holds the mirror before him.*] Look at your earrings—what——?

First Policeman [*coming in through door at left, good-natured manner*]. Skipper Hengst has requested the Police—— If you please, my little man, we have no time to lose.

Bar. [*screaming*]. I won't go! I won't go! The ship —is rotten——

Second Policeman [*smiling good-naturedly*]. Then you should not have mustered in. Must we use force? Come now, little man. [*Taps him kindly on the shoulder.*]

Bar. Don't touch me! Don't touch me! [*Clings desperately to the bedstead and door jamb.*]

Second Policeman. Must we put on the handcuffs, boy?

Bar. [*moaning*]. Help me, mother! You'll never see me again! I shall drown in the dirty, stinking sea!

First Policeman [*crossly*]. Come, come! Let go of the door jamb! [*Seizes his wrists.*]

Bar. [*clinging harder*]. No! [*Shrieking.*] Cut off my hands! O God, O God, O God! [*Crawls up against the wall, beside himself with terror.*]

Kneir. [*almost crying*]. The boy is afraid——

First Policeman. Then you tell him to let go!

Kneir. [*sobbing as she seizes* BAREND'S *hands*]. Come now, boy—come now—God will not forsake you——

Bar. [*moaning as he loosens his hold, sobs despairingly*]. You'll never see me again, never again——

First Policeman. Forward, march!

[*They exeunt, dragging* BAREND.

Kneir. Oh, oh——

Truus [*with anxious curiosity, at side door*]. What was the matter, Kneir?

Kneir. [*sobbing*]. Barend had to be taken by the police. Oh, and now I'm ashamed to go walk through the village, to tell them good-bye—the disgrace—the disgrace——

It is evening. The Widow Kneirtje's room is dimly illumined by a lamp. A rushing wind howls about the house. The widow is lying on a bed, and Jo is reading to her from a prayer book. Jo asks if she is listening, and calls her attention to this stanza:

"Mother Mary! in piteousness,
To your poor children of the sea,
Reach down your arms in their distress;
With God their intercessor be.
Unto the Heart Divine your prayer
Will make an end to all their care."

There is a knock on the door. It is Clementine who has brought some broth and eggs for Kneirtje. She is accompanied by Kaps, her father's bookkeeper. Kneirtje rises and inquires if the wind has gone down any. Suddenly there is a terrific crash outside. Cobus, Kneirtje's brother, enters and says that he had a narrow escape. A big tree was snapped in two like a pipe stem and missed him by a hair. But he is not afraid of death, he says. God takes them and they take the fish.

Cobus. When I was on the herring catch, or on the salting voyage, there were times when I didn't dare use the cleaning knife. Because when you shove a herring's head to the left with your thumb, and you lift out the gullet with the blade, the creature looks at you with such knowing eyes, and yet you clean two hundred in an hour. And when you cut throats out of fourteen hundred cod, that makes twenty-eight hundred eyes that look at you! Look! Just look. Ask me how many fish have I killed? I had few equals in boning and cutting livers. Tja, tja, and how afraid they all were! Afraid! They looked up at the clouds as if they were saying: "How about this now? He blessed us same as He blessed you." I say: we take the fish and God takes us. We must all, the beasts must, and the men must, and because we all must, none of us should —now, that's just as if you'd pour a full barrel into an empty one. I'd be afraid to be left alone in the empty barrel, with every one else in the other barrel. No, being afraid is no good; being afraid is standing on your toes and looking over the edge.

Kneirtje goes out to see if the tree fell on the pigpen and killed the pig, and Jo follows to look after her.

Clementine [*at the window*]. Oh! Oh! Oh! What a gale! [*Returning to the table.*] Cobus, I'll thank God when the *Good Hope* is safely in.

Cob. Tja, no ship is safe to-night. But the *Hope* is an old ship, and old ships are the last to go down.

Clem. That's what you say.

Cob. No, that's what every old sailor says. Have a bowl, Miss?

Clem. [*after a silence, staring*]. All the same, I shall pray God to-night.

Cob. That's real good of you, Miss. But the *Jocaba*

is out and the *Mathilda* is out and the *Expectation* is out. Why should you pray for one ship?

Clem. The *Good Hope* is rotten—so—so—— [*Stops anxiously.*]

Cob. [*drinking coffee*]. Who said that?

Clementine stammeringly tries to retrieve her indiscretion. She is relieved by the return of Kneirtje and Jo. Simon comes in with his daughter, Marietje, whose sweetheart, Mees, is on the *Good Hope*. Presently Simon and Cobus go out together.

Marietje tells of a sort of dream she had the evening before when she was half awake. There was a rap on the window. She lay still, and again there was a rap. Then she got up. There was nothing to be seen, nothing. As soon as she lay down there came another rap, and then she saw Mees. His face was very pale. She rushed to the window and there was nothing there, nothing but the wind.

Two women neighbors, Saart and Truus, come in for company. Truus's little boy is on the *Good Hope*. They find Kneirtje, Jo, and Marietje looking very scared. The story that has just been told leads to others. They tell how their men have been lost at sea. Truus's first husband was on a ship that never came home, and her second was killed by a blow from a capstan bar. Marietje's little brother was knocked overboard. Finally Kneirtje recounts a gruesome experience of her husband's when he was rescued after clinging a whole night to an upturned boat, with a sailor who had gone crazy, and finally slipped off into the water. But the rescue of her husband at that time did no good, for three years later, twelve years ago now, he was lost with his two sons in the *Clementina*.

Jo springs up wildly, beating her head with her fists, and cries that they are all driving her mad, telling those horrible stories instead of cheering them up.

Jo. And now ask me for my story! [*Shrieking.*] My father was drowned, drowned, drowned! There are others—all—drowned, drowned!—and—you are all miserable wretches—you are! [*Violently bangs the door shut as she runs out.*]

Truus [*anxiously*]. I believe she's afraid.

Marietje. Shall I go after her?

Kneir. No, child, she will quiet down by herself. Nervous strain of the last two days. Are you going now, Miss?

Clem. It has grown late, Kneir, and your niece—your niece was a little unmannerly. No, I'm not offended. Who is going to take me home?

Saart. If one goes, we all go. Together we won't blow away. Good-night, Kneir.

Mar. [*depressed*]. Good-night, Aunt Kneir.

Kneir. Thank you again, Miss, for the soup and eggs.

Truus. Are you coming to drink a bowl with me to-morrow night? Please say yes.

Kneir. Well, perhaps. Good-night, Miss. Good-night, Marietje. Good-night, Saart. If you see Jo send her in at once.

All go out except Kneirtje. She clears away the cups. A fierce wind howls, shrieking about the house. She listens anxiously at the window, shoves her chair close to the chimney, stares into the fire. Her lips move in a muttered prayer while she fingers a rosary. Jo enters, drops into a chair by the window, and nervously unpins her shawl.

Kneir. You'd better go to bed. You are all unstrung. What an outburst! And that dear child that came out in the storm to bring me soup and eggs.

Jo [*roughly*]. Your sons are out in the storm for her and her father.

Kneir. And for us.

Jo. And for us. [*A silence.*] The sea is so wild.

Kneir. Have you been to look?

Jo [*anxiously*]. I couldn't stand against the wind. Half the guard rail is washed away, the pier is under water. [*A silence.* KNEIRTJE *prays.*] Oh! Oh! I'm dead from those miserable stories!

Kneir. You're not yourself to-night. You never went on like this when Geert sailed with the Navy. Go to bed and pray. Prayer is the only consolation. A sailor's wife must not be weak. In a month or two it will storm again; each time again. And there are many fishermen on the sea besides our boys. [*Her speech sinks into a soft murmur. Her old fingers handle the rosary.*]

Jo. Barend, we almost drove him away! I taunted him to the last.

Seeing that Kneirtje prays, she walks to the window wringing her hands, pulls up the curtain uncertainly, stares through the window panes. Then she cautiously opens a window shutter. The wind blows the curtain on high, the lamp dances, the light puffs out. She swiftly closes the window.

Kneir. [*angry from fear*]. Have you gone crazy! Keep your paws off that window!

Jo [*moaning*]. Oh! oh! oh!——

Kneir. [*terrified*]. Shut your mouth! Look for the matches! Not so slow! Quick! Beside the soap dish. [*A silence.*] Have you got them? [Jo *lights the lamp, shivering with fear.*] I'm completely chilled. [*To* Jo, *who crouches sobbing by the chimney.*] Why do you sit there?

Jo. I'm afraid.

Kneir. [*anxiously*]. You must not be.

Jo. If anything happens—then—then——

Kneir. Be sensible. Undress yourself.

Jo. No, I shall stay here all night.

Kneir. Now, I ask you, how will it be when you're married? When you are a mother yourself?

Jo [*passionately*]. You don't know what you say! You don't know what you say, Aunt Kneir! If Geert—— [*Stops panting.*] I didn't dare tell you.

Kneir. Is it between you and Geert? [Jo *sobs loudly.*] That was not good of you—not good—to have secrets. Your lover—your husband—is my son. [*A silence, the wind shrieks.*] Don't stare that way into the fire. Don't cry any more. I shall not speak any hard words. Even if it was wrong of you and of him. Come and sit opposite to me, then together we will—— [*Lays her prayer book on the table.*]

Jo [*despairingly*]. I don't want to pray.

Kneir. Don't want to pray?

Jo [*excitedly*]. If anything happens——

Kneir. [*vehemently*]. Nothing will happen!

Jo [*wildly*]. If anything—anything—anything—then I'll never pray again, never again. Then there is no God. No, Mother Mary—then there is nothing—nothing——

Kneir. [*anxiously*]. Don't talk like that.

Jo. What good is a child without a husband!

Kneir. How dare you say that?

Jo [*beating her head on the table*]. The wind! It drives me mad, mad!

Kneir. [*opens the prayer book, touches* Jo's *arm.* Jo *looks up, sobbing passionately, sees the prayer book, shakes her head fiercely. Again wailing, drops to the floor, which she beats with her hands.* KNEIRTJE'S *trembling voice sounds*]. Oh, Merciful God! I trust! With a firm faith, I trust. [*The wind races with wild lashings about the house.*]

Kaps is at work in Bos's office when Simon comes in like so many others to ask if there is any news of the *Good Hope*. He accuses Kaps, who is slightly deaf and never hears more than he thinks it discreet to hear, of knowing more than he admits about the condition of the vessel.

Simon. I warned you folks when that ship lay in the docks. What were the words I spoke then, eh?

Kaps [*shrugging his shoulders*]. All tales on your part for a glass of gin!

Simon. You lie. You were there, and the Miss was there. I says, "The ship is rotten, that caulking was damn useless. That a floating coffin like that——"

Kaps. Good! that's what you said. I don't deny it. What of it? Are you so clever that when you're half drunk——

Simon [*angrily*]. That's a damned lie!

Kaps. Not drunk then, are you such an authority, you a shipmaster's assistant, that when you say "no," and the owner and the Insurance Company say "yes," my employer must put his ship in the dry docks?

Simon. Damned rot! I warned you! And now, I say —now, I say—that if Mees, my daughter's betrothed, not to speak of the others, if Mees—there will be murder.

Kaps. You make me laugh! Go get yourself a dram and talk sense.

Enter MARIETJE.

Simon. Better have stayed outside. No tidings.

Mar. [*softly sobbing*]. No tidings.

Simon. Murder will come of it. [*Both off.*

Saart is the next to worry the bookkeeper. Seven families are stricken, she says, by the loss of the *Hope*. Old Cobus enters, trembling with agitation, and nearly breaks down when he asks for tidings. He knows that the wate:

bailiff has received a telegram, and implores Kaps to help him out in his uncertainty. His sister and niece, he says, are simply insane with grief. Kaps declares curtly that he wouldn't give a cent for the old ship after such a storm.

The telephone rings just as Clementine enters the office, and she answers it.

Clem. [*startled*]. What did you say? A hatch marked 47—and—[*trembling*]—I don't understand you. [*Screams and lets the receiver fall.*]

Kaps. What's that? What's that?

Clem. [*painfully shocked*]. I don't dare listen—— Oh, oh!

Kaps. Was that the water bailiff?

Clem. [*passionately*]. Barend washed ashore. O God, now it is ended!

Saart. Barend?——Barend?——

Clem. A telegram from Nieuwediep. A hatch—and a corpse——

Bos comes in and asks his daughter what she is crying about. He rings up the water bailiff and has a talk with him himself, learning that Barend was identified by his earrings. He says it is damned sad, that they are in God's hands, and that he will notify the insurance company. Then he turns on Clementine and scolds her savagely for having repeated what Simon said about the *Good Hope*. It won't be five minutes now, he says, before half the village will be there.

Clem. Why didn't you listen? [*Sobs softly.*]

Bos. Listen!

Clem. When Simon, the shipbuilder's assistant——

Bos. The fellow was drunk.

Clem. [*firmly*]. He was not!

Bos. He was, too! And if he hadn't been, what right have you to stick your nose into matters you don't understand?

Clem. Dear God, now I am also guilty——

Bos [*angrily.*] Guilty? Guilty! Have the novels you read gone to your head? Guilty! Are you possessed, to use those words after such an accident?

Clem. He said that the ship was a floating coffin. Then I heard you say that in any case it would be the last voyage for the *Hope*.

Bos [*angrily at first*]. That damned boarding-school; those damned boarding-school fads! Walk if you like through the village like a fool, sketching the first rascal or beggar you meet! But don't blab out things you can be held to account for. A floating coffin! Say, rather, a drunken authority—the *North*, of Pieterse, and the *Surprise* and the *Willem III* and the *Young John*. I can keep on naming them. Half of the fishing fleet and half the merchant fleet are floating coffins. Did you hear that, Kaps?

Kaps [*timidly*]. No, Meneer, I don't hear anything.

Bos tells Clementine that he would have explained everything to her if she had only asked him. The fact that the underwriters inspect his ships yearly ought to satisfy her, because they are careful not to pay out insurance if they can help it. Kaps begins to read the muster roll of the lost vessel. Truus and Marietje come in.

Truus [*panting*]. Are there tidings? Tidings of my little son? [*Wild despair.*] Ach, God! Ach, God; don't make me unhappy, Meneer!——

Bos. I'm sorry, Mrs. Stappers——

Mar. [*shrieking*]. It can't be! It can't be! You lie!—It isn't possible!——

Bos [*gently*]. The Burgomaster at Nieuwediep has telegraphed the water bailiff. Barend Vermeer was washed ashore. You know what that means, and a hatch of the 47——

Truus [*loudly*]. Oh, Mother Mary, must I lose that child, too? that lamb of twelve years! [*With a whimpering cry.*] Oh, oh, oh, oh! Oh, oh, oh, oh!—Pietje—Pietje——

Mar. [*bewildered*]. Then—— Then—— [*Bursts into a hysterical laugh.*] Hahaha!—Hahaha!——

Bos. Give her a glass of water.

Mar. [*striking the glass from* CLEMENTINE'S *hand*]. Go away! Go away! [*Falling on her knees, her hands catching hold of the railing gate.*] Let me die!—Let me die, please, dear God, dear God!

Clem. [*sobbing*]. Come Marietje, be calm; get up.

Truus. On his first voyage. And so brave; as he stood there, waving, when the ship—— [*Sobs loudly.*]

Bos. It can't be helped, Truus. It is a visitation. There hasn't been a storm like that in years. Think of

Hengst with four children, and Jacob and Gerrit—— And, although it's no consolation, I will hand you your boy's wages to-day, if you like. Both of you go home now and resign yourselves to the inevitable—take her with you—she seems——

Mar. [*with trembling sobs*]. I don't want to go home. I want to die, die——

Clem. [*supporting her*]. Cry, Marietje, cry, poor lamb——

When the two women have gone out, Bos asks Kaps how the widows' and orphans' fund stands. Kaps replies that it fell short some time ago, and that another public appeal will have to be made. Bos's wife comes to ask him if he will go to the parlor and see the Burgomaster's wife about the fund. Clementine comes back weeping. Kaps assures her it is very unwise to make herself miserable. So many ships go down, he says, that the *Good Hope* hardly counts. Cobus returns with Jo, who believes there is a possibility that Geert may have been saved in a boat.

Simon comes back again drunk. He is in a bold mood and gives Bos a bad turn by going close to him and making a threatening gesture. Bos calls him a sot with nervous vehemence, and tells him to get out. He is not reassured when Simon says he won't murder him.

Simon [*steadying himself by holding to the gate*]. No—stay where you are—I'm going—I—I—only wanted to say how nicely it came out—with—with—the *Good Hope*.

Bos. You get out, immediately!

Simon. Don't come so close to me—never come so close to a man with a knife—— No-o-o-o—I have no bad intentions. I only wanted to say that I warned you—when—she lay in the docks.

Bos. You lie, you rascal!

Simon. Now just for the joke of it—you ask—ask—ask your bookkeeper and your daughter—who were there——

Bos [*vehemently*]. That's a lie. You're not worth an answer, you sot! I have nothing to do with you! My business is with your employer. Did you understand me, Kaps?

Simon. My employer—doesn't do the caulking himself.

[*To* KAPS, *who has advanced to the gate.*] Didn't I warn him?—wasn't you there?

Kaps. [*looking anxiously at* BOS]. No, I wasn't there, and even if I was, I didn't hear anything.

Bos. [*to* CLEMENTINE]. And now, you! Did that drunken sot——

Clem. [*almost crying with anxiety*]. Papa!

Bos [*threatening*]. As my daughter do you permit—— [*Grimly.*] Answer me!

Clem. [*anxiously*]. I don't remember——

Simon. That's low—that's low—damned low! I said, the ship was rotten—rotten——

Bos. A drunken man's stories. You're trying to drag in my bookkeeper and daughter, and you hear——

Cob. Yes, but—yes, but—now I remember also——

Bos. By thunder! you warned us, too, eh?

Cob. No, no, that would be lying. But your daughter—your daughter says now she hadn't heard the ship was rotten. And on the second night of the storm, when she was alone with me at my sister Kneirtje's, she did say that—that——

Clem. [*trembling*]. Did I—say——

Cob. Yes, that you did! That very evening. These are my words to you: "Now you are fibbing, Miss; for if your father knew the *Good Hope* was rotten——

Jo [*springing up wildly, speaking with piercing distinctness*]. You, you lie! You began to cry. You were afraid ships would be lost. I was there, and Truus was there, and—— Oh, you adders!

Bos [*banging his desk with his fist*]. Adders! Adders! You scum! Who gives you your feed, year in, year out? Haven't you decency enough to believe us instead of that drunken beggar who reels as he stands there?

Jo [*raving with anger*]. Believe you? You! She lies and you lie!

Bos [*threatening*]. Get out of my office!

Jo. You had Barend dragged on board by the police; Geert was too proud to be taken! Thief! thief! [*Overwrought, hysterical laugh.*] No, no, you needn't point to your door! We are going. If I stayed here any longer I would spit in your face—spit in your face! [*Makes threatening gesture.*]

Cob. [*restraining her*]. Come—come——

Bos [*after a silence*]. For your Aunt's sake I will consider that you are overwrought; otherwise—otherwise—— The *Good Hope* was seaworthy, was seaworthy! Have I no loss? Even if the ship was insured? And even had the fellow warned me—which is a lie, could I, a business man, take the word of a drunkard who can no longer get a job because he is unable to handle tools?

Simon [*stammering*]. I—I told you and him and her—that a floating coffin like that. That stands fast!

Jo [*bursting out*]. Oh oh! Geert and Barend and Mees and the others! O God, how could you allow it! [*Sinks on the chair, sobbing.*] Give me the money to go to Nieuwediep myself, then I won't speak of it any more.

Bos [*vindictively*]. No! Not a red cent! A girl that talks to me as rudely as you did——

Jo [*confused, crying*]. I don't know what I said—and —and—I don't believe that you—that you—that you would be worse than the devil.

Bos. The water bailiff says that it isn't necessary to send any one to Nieuwediep.

Jo [*staggering to the door*]. Not necessary! Not necessary! What will become of me now——?

Bos paces about. He tells Clementine not to dare to set foot in his office again. Then he calls up the underwriters and demands the insurance money. Finally Kneirtje comes in. She sinks down on the bench, patiently weeping. When Bos sees her he asks why she did not knock. She stares helplessly, her arms hanging limp. Bos says he has sympathy for her, knowing she is a respectable woman, but that he is sorry to have to tell her that that niece of hers has never been any good. He reminds her that her son almost put him out of the house. He is suddenly frightened at noticing that her head has sunk down as if she were insensible. He and Kaps bathe her forehead and wrists. Presently she comes to with long-drawn sobs and sits looking before her with a dazed stare.

Kneir. [*in an agonized voice, broken with sobs*]. He didn't want to go! He didn't want to go! And with my own hands I loosened his fingers from the door post. [*Moans softly.*]

Bos [*in a muffled voice*]. You have no cause to reproach yourself——

Kneir. [*in the same voice as before*]. Before he went I hung his father's rings in his ears. Like—like a lamb to the slaughter——

Bos. Come——

Kneir. [*panting*]. And my oldest boy that I didn't bid good-bye—— "If you're too late"—these were my words —"I'll never look at you again."—"Never look at you again!"

Bos [*strongly moved*]. Stop! in God's name, stop!——

Kneir. Twelve years ago—when the *Clementine*—I sat here as I am now. [*Sobs with her face between her trembling old hands.*]

Bos. Come now, be strong.

MATHILDE *enters.*

Mathilde. Clemens! Ach, poor, dear Kneir, I am so sorry for you. It's dreadful! It is frightful! Two sons!

Kneir. [*staring*]. My husband and four sons——

Mat. [*consoling*]. But don't you worry. We have written an appeal, the Burgomaster's wife and I, and it's going to be in all the papers to-morrow. Here, Kaps—— [*Hands* KAPS *a sheet of paper which he places on desk—*Bos *motions to her to go.*] Let her wait a while, Clemens. [*Sweetly.*] I have a couple of cold chops—that will brace her up—and—and—let's make up with her. You have no objections to her coming again to do the cleaning? We won't forget you, do you hear? Good day, Kneir. Be brave. [*Exits.*]

Bos. No, we will not forget you.

Kneir. Now, my only hope is—my niece's child.

Bos [*surprised*]. A child?

Kneir. That misfortune is added. She is with child by my son—— [*Softly smiling.*] Misfortune? No, that isn't a misfortune now——

Bos. And you sit and tell that? This immorality under your own roof? Don't you know the rules of the fund, that no aid can be extended to any one leading an immoral life, or whose conduct does not meet with our approval?

Kneir. [*submissive voice*]. I leave it to the gentlemen themselves—to do for me—the gentlemen——

Bos. It will be a tussle with the Committee—the com-

mittee of the fund—your son had been in prison and sang revolutionary songs. And your niece who—— However, I will do my best. I shall recommend you, but I can't promise anything. There are seven new families awaiting aid, sixteen new orphans. [*Rising and closing the safe.*] No, sit a while longer. My wife wants to give you something to take home with you. [*Exits.*

Mat. [*invisible*]. Kaps! Kaps! [*The bookkeeper rises, disappears for a moment, and returns with a dish and an enamelled pan.*]

Kaps [*kindly*]. If you will return the dish when it's convenient, and if you'll come again Saturday, to do the cleaning. [*She stares vacantly. He closes her nerveless hands about the dish and pan; shuffles back to his stool. A silence.* KNEIRTJE *sits motionless, in dazed agony; mumbles —moves her lips—rises with difficulty, stumbles out of the office.*]

Kaps [*taking up sheet of paper from desk*]. Appeal, for the newspapers! [*Smiling sardonically, he comes to the foreground; leaning on* BOS'S *desk, he reads.*] "Benevolent fellow countrymen, again we urge upon your generosity an appeal in behalf of a number of destitute widows and orphans. The lugger *Good Hope*—— [*He continues reading as the curtain falls.*]

MONNA VANNA*

By Maurice Maeterlinck

First played in Paris in May 17, 1902.

Argument: To save Pisa from being taken by storm and sacked by the Florentines, Monna Vanna, wife of the commander of the garrison, agrees to visit Prinzivalle, the commander of the enemy, at night in his tent, clad only in her mantle. Prinzivalle, swayed by admiration and by the love he has long felt for Monna Vanna, does not require submission of her, and to save him from the Florentines, whom he has betrayed by sending munitions to Pisa, she takes him back with her to the city. Will Vanna's husband accept her account of what has happened, and will Vanna and Prinzivalle be brought together as lovers?

From the windows of Guido Colonna's palace is seen a wide stretch of the country about Pisa, where the army of Florence has drawn its lines close to the walls during a siege of three months. Desperate resistance has been made, but now both food and ammunition have given out, and it is only a question of hours when the city will be subject to sack, rapine and slaughter. In this extremity, Guido Colonna, the commander, is consulting with his lieutenants. The walls are breached, little resistance can be made, and they do not understand why Prinzivalle, the leader of the Florentines, delays the assault.

Marco Colonna, Guido's father, returns from Prinzivalle's camp, whither he went to treat of terms. He tells his son that he bears a message fraught with salvation to 30,000 lives, and with heavy affliction to one. The old man is long-winded, roundabout. He expected to find Prinzivalle the incarnate fiend of battle, headstrong and

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incoherent, vain, debauched, treacherous, and cruel. He found him learned, studious, humane, and generous, with no liking for war, and a reluctant servant of the perfidious Republic of Florence. Guido implores his father to say what salvation is offered.

It is true that he does wrong to hesitate, replies Marco, cruel as the thing is to the two creatures he loves best of all on this earth. Guido accepts his share of the evil, whatever it may be, but asks who is the other to suffer. Marco wanders off, talking of the determination of Florence to destroy them. The city will be assaulted by Spanish and German mercenaries who need no urging to violence. The leaders will pretend to have lost all control. Prinzivalle has come under the suspicion of his employers by delaying the attack so long. Condemnation, torture, and death await him when Pisa is destroyed. He proposes to come into Pisa and help defend her with his own bodyguard, and the archers, who are devoted to him.

Such auxiliaries would be dangerous, says Guido, and they do not need the men. What they require are ammunition and provisions. But Prinzivalle offers also to divert to Pisa three hundred wagons laden with ammunition and food that have just entered his camp. Guido does not understand why Prinzivalle does not seek some simpler way of revenge on Florence and safety for himself. Whither will he go and what will become of him? What does he demand in return? The moment has come, Marco says, when words turn cruel and all-powerful, when two or three syllables suddenly borrow the face of destiny. He trembles when he thinks that the sound of his voice can cause so many deaths or save so many lives. The cruellest words, Guido returns, can add nothing to such a misfortune as theirs.

A sorrow awaits Guido, his father proceeds, that should be no sorrow perhaps, could he consider it rightly. If he rejects the promise, Marco has given his promise to return to the enemy's camp where death and torture will probably be the reward of his loyalty. But the mighty convoy of wagons laden with corn and wine and fruit; the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle shall be introduced into Pisa that very night if Guido will send in exchange and deliver to Prinzivalle—and she shall return with the first rays of

dawn, Marco says—but he demands, in token of victory and submission, that she come alone and clad only in her mantle.

Guido. Who? Who is to go? You have not told me . . .

Marco. Giovanna.

Guido. What! My wife? . . . Vanna? . . .

Marco. Yes, your Vanna . . . At last I have said it!

Guido. But why Vanna? Are there not a thousand women?

Marco. It is because she is the most beautiful, and he loves her . . .

Guido. He loves her! . . . Where has he seen her? He does not know her!

Marco. He has seen her. He knows her, but would not say when or how . . .

Guido. But she, has she seen him? Where have they met?

Marco. She has never seen him, or at least she does not remember.

Guido is astonished to find that his father has already seen Vanna and told her of this infamous bargain. When he learns that she turned white upon hearing it, he says that was better than reproaches. He tells his lieutenants that they will return to the ramparts and die without staining themselves with dishonor.

Marco asks him to give reason time to discriminate between duty and private sorrow. He must ask himself whether he has a right to sacrifice a whole people. Did Guido's happiness alone depend upon his choice Marco could understand his preferring death; though to him who is near the end of life there can be no moral or physical evil that is not preferable to death, cold and horrible death, with its eternal silence. And here many thousands of lives are at stake. If he yields to a madman's frenzy, then the thing that seems monstrous to him shall be called heroic by those who come after. The most heroic deed is the one that costs us most, and death is often far easier than life.

In fury Guido rejects the loathsome compact. His father may choose death for his share and return to the enemy's camp. He will hear no more; they and his lieu-

tenants will keep the secret, and bury all this in their hearts. But buried it cannot be, returns Marco. Guido is not the only judge. All those whose life or death hangs on this hour have a right to know their fate, and to be told upon what their salvation depends. Upon leaving the room he will at once inform the people of Prinzivalle's offer.

While Pisa stands, says Guido, he is the master and the custodian of her honor. To his lieutenants, Borso and Torello, he entrusts his father. No one shall know. Marco replies that he may be imprisoned, but not his secret, for that is free and can no longer be stifled. At this very moment it is being discussed by the Seignory. Guido guesses that it will not be difficult to foretell what the Seignory will decide. To save themselves they have only to sacrifice one man. But he is wrong. The Seignory have refused to owe their safety to the sacrifice of a woman's love. They have summoned Vanna to place the fate of the city in her hands.

Guido does not doubt that Vanna will refuse. Marco has noticed a certain strength in Vanna, and that leaves him in no doubt as to what her answer will be. Guido says if Vanna's decision is not the same as his, then they have both been deceived in each other, and their love will have been a mere lie. Cries of "Vanna, Vanna," arise from the crowd outside. The door at the back opens and Vanna, alone and pale, advances into the room. Men and women who seem afraid to enter try to hide themselves against the door. Guido rushes to Vanna, throws his arms around her and embraces her frantically.

Vanna has decided that she must go. Guido asks if she means to kill Prinzivalle, then if she loves him, and finally will not believe that she has spoken and asks her to dispel this dream. She says she knows how hard it must be to bear. He thrusts her from him. Has he not to bear it all, he who loved? He declares that she never loved him. Now he begins to see. She is glad to leave him. She loves this man. But he is still the master. Does she think he will let these things be? He will place her in a dungeon until such time as her heroism shall have cooled, and she learns where her duty lies. He gives the command to have her taken away.

Guido. They do not obey! No one here to do my bid-

ding! You, Borso, Torello, have your arms turned to stone? Can my voice not make itself heard! . . . You, down there, you others, who stand and listen, can you not hear me? I shout to them; they do not move . . . Take her away, I say! . . . Away, away! . . . Ah, I see what it is! They are afraid; they want to live—to live, that is all they care for! I must die that they may live; but not that way! . . . No, no, that were surely too easy . . . Here am I alone against the crowd, and I am to pay for it all . . . Why I, and not you! You all have wives! . . . [*Half drawing his sword and approaching* VANNA.] And what if I prefer death to dishonor? . . . That had not occurred to you! . . . But, see, I have only to raise my hand——

Vanna. If your love bids you, Guido . . .

Guido. "If your love bids you!" Ah, yes, speak of love, you who never have known what it means! You, in whose soul there can never have been any love! Now as I look at you I see a desert—a desert where all is swallowed up, parched and dying . . . not even a tear, not a tear! . . . What was I, what was I to you? A man whose arms offered shelter, that was all! . . . Had you but for an instant . . .

Vanna. Guido, look at me, look at me! Can you not see? What shall I say to you, Guido? Have I words to tell what I feel? Let me speak but one single word and all my strength goes! . . . I cannot . . . I love you, I owe everything to you! . . . And yet I shall go; I must, I must . . .

Guido [*thrusting her from him*]. It is well! Go; get you hence! Go to him, I give you up. Go! You are mine no longer . . .

Vanna [*seizing his hand*]. Guido! . . .

Guido [*pushing her away*]. Ah, do not clutch at me with those warm, soft hands . . . My father was right; he knew you better . . . Father, here she is. This is your work, finish it now to the end . . . Lead her to this man's tent. I shall stay here and watch you go off together . . . But do not imagine that I claim a share in the bread and meat she will buy . . . There remains but one thing for me, and that you shall know very soon . . .

Vanna [*clinging to him*]. Guido, look at me; do not turn your eyes from me—that is too dreadful . . . Let me see your eyes, Guido . . .

Guido. See then! Look into my eyes, and read . . . Go, I know you no longer! Time presses—out yonder he waits: night is falling . . . Go! what have you to fear? I shall not kill myself. I am not mad; it is only when love is triumphant that reason totters, not when love crumbles . . . I have gazed into the very depths of love, ay, of love and fidelity . . . I have no more to say. No, no, unclasp your fingers; they cannot detain a vanishing love. All is over, finished, done with; there remains not a trace! . . . The past is engulfed, and the future, too . . . Ah, yes, those pure white fingers, those noble eyes, those lips; there was a time when I believed . . . Now nothing remains . . . [*Casting* VANNA'S *hands from him.*] Nothing, nothing, less than nothing! Farewell, Vanna! Get you gone! Farewell . . . You go yonder? . . .

Vanna. Yes . . .

Guido. You will not return? . . .

Vanna. Yes, I shall return . . .

Guido. As to that, we shall see . . . Ah, we shall see . . . Who could have told me that my father knew her better than I! . . .

He totters, and clings to one of the marble columns. Vanna goes out slowly and alone, without another glance at him.

Prinzivalle's tent is sumptuously arrayed with hangings of silk and gold. Arms and precious furs are strewn about. Great chests lie half open, revealing quantities of jewels and glittering stuffs. Prinzivalle, standing by a table, is arranging documents, plans, and arms. Vedio, his secretary, comes in with a letter from Trivulzio, the first Commissioner of Florence. Prinzivalle finds that it contains an order for him to deliver an attack upon Pisa at dawn under pain of immediate arrest.

Such stale and hackneyed words, Prinzivalle says, cannot bring terror to the man who awaits the supreme hour of his life. As Marco Colonna has not returned to him he knows that his offer has not been rejected. It seems strange to him that he should confide all his destiny to a

thing so frail as the love of a woman. Yet he has waited for this hour from boyhood, waited and yearned. Looking out of his tent toward Pisa, he sees a light flaring from the campanile. It is the signal heralding the trembling footsteps of the woman who gives herself that others may live.

Trivulzio enters. He speaks first of the high esteem in which he holds Prinzivalle. Enemies accuse Prinzivalle most bitterly, he says, of indecision, vacillation, sloth. Doubt is thrown upon his loyalty. Florence at this very moment is in danger, menaced by an army from Venice. All may yet be well if on the morrow Prinzivalle delivers the assault. Prinzivalle replies that he has intercepted two letters in which Trivulzio basely and falsely denounced his every action. He asks whether they were written from pure malice, or to provide the treacherous avarice of Florence with an excuse for dealing cheaply with a victorious mercenary.

In these letters every action of Prinzivalle's has been disfigured, degraded, besmirched; and this from the very first week of the siege down to the present hour, the fortunate hour, he says, in which he has resolved to justify Trivulzio's suspicions. He has been judged unheard and condemned to death. He knows full well that not all the innocence of the archangels could help him to escape from the damning proofs that Trivulzio has provided.

Hitherto Prinzivalle has been no traitor, but since these two letters fell into his hands, he assures the Commissioner, he has been preparing the ruin of Florence. This night he will sell Trivulzio and his sorry masters; he will deal them the cruellest, the most fatal blow that lies in his power. And he will regard it as the noblest deed of his life thus to have humbled the one city that exalts treachery to a virtue, and seeks to govern the universe by means of fraud and hypocrisy, lies, ingratitude, and villainy.

Drawing his dagger, Trivulzio aims a swift blow at Prinzivalle, who wards it off, but the weapon glances across his cheek. He seizes Trivulzio by the wrist. Although he has easily mastered the Commissioner, he will not use the dagger against him, but asks him to confess that it was a despicable thing to write the letters. Trivulzio defends the letters on the ground that it was wise to guard

against the chance that Prinzivalle might become dangerous when flushed by the success of victory.

Prinzivalle turns Trivulzio over to his guard. Vedio bandages his face, and warns him that the trouble with Trivulzio will mean ruin. Prinzivalle replies that at this moment his destiny is being balanced in the sky, and that they are granting him the share of a hundred lovers, the share of a thousand joys. He touches the moment when those marked out for grand disaster or triumph suddenly find themselves on the topmost peak of their life, where all things belong to them and obey them. What comes after matters nothing.

Although not knowing whither he shall go or what will become of him, Prinzivalle tells Vedio to make good his escape alone, and to take what he wants from the coffers. There is a sound of a shot. Vedio goes out and after a moment returns with Monna Vanna. The shot was fired at her in spite of the precautions that Prinzivalle had taken to safeguard her.

In a stifled voice Monna Vanna says that she has come as Prinzivalle bade her. When he has assured himself that she accepts the bargain, he raises a curtain at the back of the tent and shows her the convoy waiting outside. He gives an order. Torches are waved to and fro, whips are cracked and wagons creak. There is a bleating of sheep and lowing of oxen. The mighty convoy has started. Thanks to Monna Vanna, Pisa will be invincible. Prinzivalle asks if she is satisfied. She replies that she is.

Prinzivalle. Let us close the tent then; and give me your hand. The evening is still mild, but the night will be cold. You have no weapons concealed about you, no poison?

Vanna. I have only my sandals and this mantle. Search me if you are afraid . . .

Prinz. It is not for myself that I fear, but for you . .

Vanna. I place the life of my people high above all . . .

Prinz. It is well, and you have done right . . . Come, sit here . . . It is a warrior's couch, rugged and fierce, narrow as a tomb, and but little worthy of you . . . Lie here, on these tiger-skins, that have never yet felt the gentle touch of a woman . . . Place this

soft fur at your feet . . . It is the skin of a lynx that an African monarch gave me on the night of a victory . .

[VANNA *sits, closely wrapped in her mantle.*]

Prinz. The light of the lamp is falling on your eyes: shall I move it?

Vanna. It matters not. . . .

Kneeling at the foot of the couch and seizing her hand, Prinzivalle utters her name, "Giovanna," in a tone of such deep feeling that she starts up and looks at him. He trembles as he speaks the name which has long remained sealed in his heart. He had spoken it every hour of every day, he tells her, like a great word of love that one yearns to utter in the presence of her whom it has so long evoked in vain. He says he is a poor wretch who for one single instant wistfully gazes at what has been the aim of his life; an unhappy man who asks nothing; who knows not even what it is he should ask; and yet he would, were it possible to him, tell her before she goes of what she has been to him, and will be to the very end of his life.

They met for the first time when she was eight years old and he was twelve. At Venice, one Sunday in June, his father, who was a goldsmith, took her mother a necklace of pearls. Prinzivalle strayed into the garden. He found her there by the side of a pond, in a grove of myrtle, crying because her ring had fallen into the water. He recovered it and placed it on her finger. He was nearly drowned, but she kissed him and was happy. She remembers a fair-haired child named Gianello. It was he. He shifts the bandage on his face and she recognizes him faintly, especially by his smile, which is still that of a child.

He can recall the garden to his mind's eye, with its pomegranates, its roses, and laurels. They played there often. At last his father took him to Africa. He was made prisoner by the Arabs and led a wandering life. When he saw Venice again her mother was dead; the garden lay waste. He sought her in vain, till at last he heard of her owing to the fame of her beauty. She asks if he knew her when she came into the tent.

Prinz. Had ten thousand women come into my tent, every one with a face like yours and clad alike and equally beautiful, ten thousand sisters whom their own kindred

could not distinguish, I should have risen and taken you by the hand and said, "This is she." . . . It is strange, is it not, that an image one loves should thus be able to dwell in the heart; for in this heart of mine yours lived so profoundly that it grew and it changed . . . It was different to-day from what it was yesterday; it blossomed, it became more beautiful; and the years adorned it with the gifts they bring to the budding child . . . And yet, when I saw you again it seemed at first as though my eyes deceived me . . . My memory, that had so faithfully treasured your beauty, had yet been too timid, too halting; it had not dared to endow you with all the glory which so suddenly flashed on my sight. I was like a man who remembers a flower he has only seen once as he crossed the garden in twilight, and suddenly beholds a hundred thousand flowers beneath the radiant light of the sun . . . You came in, and I saw the brow again that I knew so well, the hair, and the eyes; I saw the soul in the face I adored . . . But its beauty humbled the one that I had been silently storing for days and days, and months without end, and year after year—the beauty that had fed on a halting memory, and fallen so immeasurably short of the real . . .

She does not understand why he made no effort to see the woman whom he had loved so deeply, but he had learned at Venice that she was about to marry a great Tuscan noble, the richest and most powerful of all in Pisa. He was an adventurer without a home, without a country. Often he wandered around the walls of the city, unwilling to disturb the love and happiness that she had found. He became a mercenary. At last Florence despatched him to Pisa.

Vanna. How feeble and cowardly men become when they love! . . . Understand me well; I do not love you, nor can I tell whether I could ever have loved you . . . But it makes the very soul of love leap and cry in my heart when I find that a man who pretended to love as I might myself have loved had not more courage in the face of love . . .

Prinz. It was not courage that failed me . . . I had need of more than you think to be able to go . . . But it was too late . . .

Vanna. It was not too late when you left Venice. When one finds a love that fills a life, it never can be too late . . . Such a love never renounces. Expecting nothing, it hopes. And it persists, still, when it has ceased to hope. Had I loved as you say you loved, then I would have . . . Ah, one cannot say what one would have done . . . But this much I know: fate should not have wrenched my happiness from me without a struggle . . . I should have cried to fate, "Hence, hence, I pass here!" . . . I should have forced the very stones to side with me! And whatever the cost, the man whom I loved should have learnt of my love, and himself have pronounced the sentence, and pronounced it more than once! . . .

Prinz. [*seeking her hand*]. You do not love him, Vanna?

She withdraws her hand, for she cannot give it to him. When Guido married her she was alone, almost poor, and the woman who is alone and poor, she says, especially if her face be fair and she scornful of artifice or falsehood, soon falls victim to calumny. To these calumnies Guido paid no heed; he had faith in her, and his faith pleased her. He made her happy, at least as happy as one can be when one has renounced the vague and extravagant dreams which seem beyond human life. That is the love that fortune has given her, and she will have no other. Furthermore, she does not think he has done what such a love as he tells of would do.

She must believe him, he replies, for he is one of those who asks for nothing and hopes for nothing. She is in his tent now, and at his mercy. He has only to stretch out his hand, and all is his that the ordinary lover demands. But she knows as well as he that the love of which he has spoken craves other things; therefore he asks that she no longer doubt him. When they part to meet no more, she must know what kind of love his has been, that it halted only before the impossible.

She remembers that he has madly wrecked his future, his fame, all that he has in the world, to bring her there for an hour beneath his tent, and is forced to admit that possibly his love may be what he says. This last act is the only one that proves nothing, he returns. He should not have betrayed his country for love, but he is only a

mercenary, faithful when others are faithful, a traitor when they betray. He has been falsely accused and condemned. The thing that he has done this night, far from hastening his ruin, will perhaps save him, if that is still possible. He should have no joy in a smile of hers that he had purchased with a lie. She says this confession is worth more than love and its noblest proofs. At last she asks him what he had in mind when she entered the tent, what he had intended to do.

Prinz. Ah, how can I tell! . . . I knew I was lost, I had the wild craving to drag all things down with me . . . And I hated you because of this love of mine! I marvel now at myself when I think of it . . . There needed but a word that was not yours, a gesture different from your gestures, to unchain the brute within me and fan my hatred . . . But the moment I saw you I realized how impossible it was . . .

Vanna. So did I realize it, too, and all fear left me, for we understood each other without a word being said. And it is all very strange . . . I should have done this thing, too, I believe, had I loved like you . . . Indeed, there are moments, as I listen to you, when I fancy that I am speaking, and that your words are my words, and you hearing what I am saying . . .

Prinz. Could you have loved me, Vanna, had my evil star not brought me to you when it was too late? . . .

Vanna. Were I to tell you that I could have loved you, it would be the same as my telling you that I love you now, Gianello, and you know as well as I that cannot be . . . But we speak to each other here as though we were on a desert island . . . Were I alone in the world there would be no more to say . . . But we forget the suffering that another endures, while we two smile at the past . . . When I think of Guido's sorrow as I left Pisa, the despair in his eyes, his haggard face —oh, I can wait no longer! . . . Dawn must be close at hand, and I am so eager to know! . . . I hear a footstep, some one is passing the tent . . . People are whispering behind the curtain . . . Listen, listen! . . . What is it?

Vedio has come to the tent to warn Prinzivalle that he must flee at once. Not an instant is to be lost. Messer

Madura, the second Commissioner of Florence, has arrived and proclaimed Prinzivalle a traitor. The camp is already in an uproar.

Prinzivalle tells Vedio to take two men and escort Monna Vanna to Pisa. She asks what he will do. He does not know, and says it matters little. Vedio reminds him that Tuscany is full of spies. There will be no refuge for him.

Vanna. Come to Pisa.

Prinz. With you? . . .

Vanna. Yes.

Prinz. I cannot . . .

Vanna. If only for a few days . . . to put them off the scent . . .

Prinz. What will your husband do? . . .

Vanna. He will not fail in his duty to a guest . . .

Prinz. Will he believe you when you tell him? . . .

Vanna. Yes. . . . —If he did not believe me . . . But he will, he must . . . —Come . . .

Still he will not go, fearing for her, but she says it will not increase her danger to be accompanied by him. It is for him that they must fear. He has saved Pisa, and now it is right that Pisa should save him. He shall go under her protection. She will stand surety for him. She says he could give no better proof of his love. He consents to go.

Followed by Vanna, he goes to the entrance of the tent and throws the tapestry open. There is a vast murmur of voices and clashing of arms; but above all is heard the sound of distant bells, pealing joyfully, that burst sharply upon the silence of the night. Far away in the distance Pisa is seen on the horizon, brilliantly illuminated. Great bonfires throw a mighty glare on the dark sky.

In her happiness at the joy of Pisa, Vanna kisses Prinzivalle on the brow, the only kiss, she says, that she can give him. Suddenly she turns faint, and he supports her as they go out together.

In his apartment of state Guido is waiting with Marco, Borso, and Torello for Vanna's return. Marco implores Guido not blindly to follow the first counsels of anger and grief, not to judge her to-day, and to do nothing irrevocable. Guido says he shall act as his father would have

BERTHA KALICH AS MONNA VANNA AND HENRY JEWETT AS PRINZIVALLE

Vanna. It is for you we must fear, for you who have saved Pisa; now it is right that Pisa should save you

urged him to act but a few years ago. Pisa has food now. From this day her fighting men are his. Vanna he shall forgive when this man has ceased to live. He tells his lieutenants, furthermore, that they see a son who judges his own father, denies him and curses him.

A vague but mighty murmur is heard from without. Soon the cries take form, and from all sides are repeated clearly, "Vanna, Vanna! Glory to Monna Vanna!" Marco rushes to a portico opening on a terrace. Borso and Torello follow him. Guido remains alone, leaning against a pillar and looking straight before him. The noise from without has become louder and drawn rapidly nearer. A great crowd fills the square, the streets, the windows, and trees. A lane is opened for Vanna to pass through, and flowers are strewn before her.

At last Vanna appears at the top of the steps, accompanied by Prinzivalle, and throws herself into Marco's arms. The crowd invade the stairs and the terrace. Guido steps forward. With a brusque gesture he stops her as she is about to throw herself into his arms, and turning to the people tells them to go. But Vanna says they must wait; she must tell them all. He pushes her back in growing anger and disperses the crowd, asking if it is not enough that he has paid for their meat and wine.

Seizing his father by the arm, he says that he above all others should go, as the fault was his. Then he sees Prinzivalle and asks who he is. He snatches a halberd from one of the guard to drive him out. Vanna tells him it is Prinzivalle, his guest, who has put himself into his hands. It was he, she says, who saved her.

Guido [*after a moment's stupor, with growing exultation and vehemence that render it impossible for* VANNA *to interrupt him*]. Ah, this, my Vanna! . . . . Ah, this falls on my soul like dew from the innermost heaven! . . . Ah, Vanna, my Vanna! . . . Yes, you are right; since it had to be done, that was the way to do it! Ah, I understand your stratagem now! Yes, I see it all! . . . But I did not know, I could not imagine! . . . There are women who would have killed him, as Judith killed Holophernes! . . . But his crime is greater than that of Holophernes, and calls for a greater vengeance! . . . Therefore you brought him here; therefore you have led

him into the midst of his victims, who now shall become his executioners! . . . Ah, the magnificent triumph! . . . He followed you meekly, tenderly; and did not suspect that the kisses you gave him were kisses of hatred! . . . Here he is, caught in a trap! . . . Yes, you were right! To have killed him down there, alone in his tent, after his horrible crime—that would not have sufficed! . . . A doubt would have remained, we should not have seen him . . . All had known of the abominable compact; it was needful, therefore, that all should know the price to be paid for such treachery! . . . But how did you do it? . . . It is the greatest triumph that ever a woman . . . Ah, you shall tell them! [*He rushes to the terrace and shouts at the top of his voice.*] Prinzivalle! Prinzivalle! The enemy is here! We hold him!

The people flock back to the terrace and into the hall. Guido exclaims that there is a justice, after all. He thought that years and years must pass; that he should have to spend his life seeking his foe, in towns, in forests, in mountains. And now he suddenly springs up before him. He is no longer the magnificent Prinzivalle. There shall be no pity, he declares, for him who took by a vile and monstrous artifice the only thing in the world that could not be given.

The people whom Prinzivalle caused so much suffering, whom he sought to massacre, whose wives and children he sold into slavery, behold him now. The past is the past. They had the right to prefer their own lives to their commander's happiness, but Vanna knew how to build love anew with the thing that had killed it. She did not wish to slay him in a closed tent, but has brought the victim before them alive. She will tell how she did it, he says, but first he stops her to throw his arms around her and kiss her before them all.

Vanna [*thrusting him back violently*]. No, no! Not yet! . . . No, no, never again if you will not hear me! Listen, Guido! I speak of an honor more real, of a happiness greater than those that are blinding you! Ah, I am glad they have all returned! They will hear me, perhaps, before you will: they will understand before you understand! Listen, Guido! . . . You shall not touch me until you know . . .

Guido [*interrupting her, and again trying to embrace her*]. Yes, yes, I know—but first of all I will . . .

Vanna. Listen, I tell you! In all my life I have never lied, but to-day I am telling the profoundest truth, the truth one speaks only once, that brings life or death in its train . . . Listen; and look at me well; look at me as though you had never seen me before this hour, which is the first, the only one when you truly can love me as I wish to be loved . . . I speak to you now in the name of the life we have lived together; in the name of all that I am, of all that you are to me! . . . Be capable of believing what, perhaps, can be scarcely believed . . . I was in this man's power . . . I had been handed over to him: he did not come near me, he did not touch me . . . I come from his tent as from the home of a brother . . .

Guido. Why?

Vanna. Because he loves me . . .

Guido. Ah! so that was what you had to say to us! That was the miracle? . . . Yes, yes, at your very first words I saw there was something strange . . . It was only a flash, and I paid no heed . . . I thought that the trouble, the horror had . . . But I see now that we must look into it . . . So he did not come near you, you say; he did not touch you? . . .

Vanna. No.

Guido. Not even kiss you?

Vanna. I gave him one kiss on the brow, which he returned.

Guido. And you can tell this to me? . . . Vanna, Vanna, has this fearful night driven you mad?

Vanna. I tell you the truth.

Guido. The truth! Great God! it is that, and that alone, that I seek! But the truth must be human . . . What! a man who betrays his country, ruins his life, sets all the world against him forever—and does all this that you should go to his tent alone—this man demands but a kiss on the brow; and comes to us here with you to make us believe it? . . . No, no; we must be just, and not gibe too much at misfortune . . . If this was all that he asked, why inflict so much misery upon our whole people? And flood me with such despair? . . . This night has

lasted ten years: I have scarcely survived it! . . . Ah, had this been all he sought he could have saved us without this torture! . . . We should have welcomed him like a god, like a deliverer! You shake your head . . . See, the people shall judge, the people shall answer. [*Addressing the crowd.*] Have you heard? I know not why she has said these things; but what she has said is said, and you shall be judges . . . You will believe her, perhaps, since she has saved you . . . If you believe her, speak . . . . Let those who believe her step out from the crowd! . . . Let them come to us here, and give the lie to poor human reason! . . . Let them come, all those who believe! . . . I am anxious to look at them, and see what sort of men they are!

Marco alone stands forth. One hears only indistinct murmurs. Marco rushes forward crying, "I believe her!" Guido says he is the accomplice. Vanna tells him that any one had cause to believe her, except he who loved her. He replies that he will not become her dupe because he loved her. Imploring him to look at her, she declares that all her loyalty, all her strength and her truth are in her eyes. He must believe it; Prinzivalle did not touch her.

Guido thinks she is seeking to save Prinzivalle. Raising his voice, he tells the crowd that he is restraining himself only by a superhuman effort. These two, Vanna and Prinzivalle, he says, love each other; they shall go forth free with his consent, wherever their love may guide their footsteps; and all he asks in exchange is that this woman first of all shall tell him the truth. He demands the truth in exchange for what he will give her.

Vanna. I have told you the truth . . . He did not touch me . . .

Guido. It is well. You have spoken—you have condemned him. Now there is nothing more to be done. [*He calls the guards and points to* PRINZIVALLE.] That man belongs to me; take him and bind him; thrust him into the lowest dungeon beneath this hall. I shall go with you. [*To* VANNA.] You will never see him again; but on my return I shall report to you his last words . . .

Vanna [*throwing herself in the midst of the guards, who are seizing* PRINZIVALLE *and leading him away*]. No, no! I have lied, I have lied. [*To* GUIDO.] Yes, what you say

is true! [*Pushing the guards away.*] Go, you must not take what is mine! For he is mine, he belongs to me, not to you! To me alone! It is for me to punish—the coward who when I was helpless, defenceless . . .

Prinz. [*trying to drown her voice*]. She lies! She lies! She lies to save me, but torture me as you will——

Vanna. Be silent! [*Turning to the crowd.*] He is afraid! [*Approaching* PRINZIVALLE, *as though enforcing silence upon* PRINZIVALLE.] Give me chains, and irons! Now that I dare speak out my hatred, it is I who shall bind him, I who brought him here. [*Whispering to* PRINZIVALLE *as she ties his hands.*] Be silent! He saves us, be silent! He has joined us. I belong to you, I love you! I love you, my Gianello! I put these chains on you, but I shall guard you, and free you! We two shall fly together! [*Shouting as though enforcing silence upon* PRINZIVALLE.] Be silent! [*Addressing the crowd.*] He pleads for mercy! [*Uncovering his face.*] Look at his face; it was my dagger, my dagger inflicted that wound! Look at him! He, the coward, the monster! [*Seeing that the guards make a movement as though to remove* PRINZIVALLE.] No, no, leave him to me! He is my victim, my prey! It is I who have bought him! He belongs to me!

Why did Prinzivalle come, and why did Vanna lie to him, Guido demands. She hesitates, picking her words. There are times when one scarcely knows what one does, she says. The thought of his love, his despair, alarmed her. She yearned to inflict a cruel death upon her victim, but was anxious also that the memory of this horrible night should not weigh upon him to the end of his days. Turning to the crowd, she tells them that what she said was for Guido's sake. She tried to kill Prinzivalle, as they may see by the wound on his face. But he disarmed her, and then she thought of a deeper revenge. She smiled on him, and he, the fool, had faith in her smile.

So mad is this man, she declares, that he believed her at once when she told him she loved him. It is she, she says, who won him. She has bought him. She totters and supports herself against a column. Turning to Marco, she entrusts her prisoner to him until she is stronger. Marco shall find a dungeon for him and give the key to her. He belongs to her, and she alone shall punish him.

Vanna. Father, he is mine; you shall answer for him. [*She looks fixedly at him.*] You understand, you are his guardian. You are responsible for him; not a hand shall approach him, and when I go to him he shall be as he is, now that I give him to you. [PRINZIVALLE *is taken away.*] Fare you well, my Prinzivalle! Ah, we shall meet again!

While Guido is in the midst of the soldiers, who brutally remove Prinzivalle, Vanna screams, totters, and falls into the arms of Marco, who rushes forward to support her.

Marco [*rapidly, in a low voice, bending over* VANNA *as she lies in his arms*]. Yes, Vanna, I understand; I understand your falsehood. You have achieved the impossible . . . It is just and very unjust, like all the things that one does . . . and still it is life that is right . . . Collect yourself, Vanna; you will have to lie again, since he refuses to believe . . . [*Calling* GUIDO.] Guido, she asks for you . . . Guido, she is coming to herself.

Guido [*rushing up and taking her in his arms*]. My Vanna! See, she smiles! . . . Vanna, tell me! . . . I never doubted . . . Now it is over, and all will be forgotten—wiped away in our good revenge . . . It was all a bad dream . . .

Vanna [*opening her eyes, and speaking in a feeble voice*]. Where is he? Yes, yes, I know, I remember . . . Give me the key . . . The key of his prison; none but myself must . . .

Guido. The moment the guards come back they shall bring the key to you, and all shall be as you wish . . .

Vanna. I want it for myself alone. So that I may be quite sure, and that no one else . . . Yes, it has been a bad dream . . . but the beautiful one will begin. The beautiful one will begin. . . .

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